

VICTIMS OF RELIGIOUS PERSECUTION AROUND THE WORLD

HEARING BEFORE THE SUBCOMMITTEE ON INTERNATIONAL OPERATIONS AND HUMAN RIGHTS OF THE COMMITTEE ON INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES ONE HUNDRED FIFTH CONGRESS

SECOND SESSION

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JUNE 16, 1998
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VICTIMS OF RELIGIOUS PERSECUTION AROUND THE WORLD

TUESDAY, JUNE 16, 1998

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
SUBCOMMITTEE ON INTERNATIONAL OPERATIONS AND
HUMAN RIGHTS,
COMMITTEE ON INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS,
Washington, DC.

The Subcommittee met, pursuant to notice, at 10 a.m. in room 2200, Rayburn House Office Building, Hon. Christopher Smith (chairman of the Subcommittee) presiding.

Mr. SMITH. The Subcommittee will come to order.

Today's hearing of the Subcommittee on International Operations and Human Rights is for the purpose of taking the testimony of five witnesses to religious persecution. These are not government officials or even analysts from nongovernmental organizations. Rather, they are people who have witnessed religious persecution firsthand, who have seen close friends or relatives imprisoned, tortured, even executed for their faith or who have suffered such horrors themselves.

This is the latest in the series of Subcommittee hearings focusing in whole or in part on persecution of religious believers. Other hearings have focused on worldwide anti-Semitism, on the persecution of Christians around the world, on the 1995 massacre of Bosnian Muslims in Srebrenica, on the enslavement of black Christians in the Sudan, and on the use of torture against religious believers and other prisoners of conscience.

We have heard from Palden Gyatso, a Tibetan Buddhist monk who displayed the instruments of torture used against him by his Chinese Communist jailers. We have heard from Hasan Nuhanovic, a Muslim who unsuccessfully begged the U.N. peacekeepers not to turn his mother, father and brother over to the murderous Bosnian Serb militia; from a Russian Jewish member of Parliament who observed, and I quote, "anti-Semitism was the first industry to be privatized" in post-Soviet Union Russia; from Karen refugees whose villages in Thailand were burned by the Burmese military dictatorship, which openly used their Christian religion as an excuse to conduct cross-border raids against them; and from Christian and Buddhists subjected to imprisonment and torture by the Communist governments of China and Vietnam.

Today's witnesses include a Catholic, a Protestant, a Muslim, a Buddhist and a Bahá'í, all with compelling and recent evidence that religious persecution is not a problem that will go away if we pretend it is not there.

In their prepared testimony, several of today's witnesses make clear that the United States should continue to press for an end to religious persecution abroad. This is important, because the Clinton Administration and some business people who oppose the Freedom from Religious Persecution Act have suggested that by publicly demanding an end to the mistreatment of these people, we are more likely to hurt them than to help them.

Personally, I believe it may be true in the short run that if the totalitarian dictatorship used to being coddled by the U.S. Government will react with anger when we suddenly insist that they behave in a civilized fashion. This is true whether the issue is religious persecution, nuclear proliferation, or anything else.

In the long run, however, these governments will act in their own self-interest. If we send a strong and consistent message that the economic and other benefits of a close relationship with the United States can be expected to flow to a government if and only if that government treats its own people decently, we are likely to save lives and promote freedom in the long run. This message has already been sent by an overwhelming 375 to 41 House vote in favor of the Freedom from Religious Persecution Act. I hope that the Senate passage and a Presidential signature will soon follow.

Whatever we do to other governments that persecute religious believers, it is also important that the United States put its own house in order. One way we can do this is to monitor and to improve our treatment of refugees with special reference to religious refugees.

Unfortunately, in recent years the U.S. commitment to refugees, both the amount we spend on protection overseas and the number of refugees we admit to the United States, has declined sharply. In the last 4 years, our State Department has asked for and has gotten a raise for every single year. Yet the only major account in which the Department has not asked for an increase is the refugee account.

The Administration's fiscal year 1999 budget request for refugees is \$63 million lower than the amount we spent in fiscal year 1995. The number of refugees in the United States has gone down from 130,000 to 75,000 in only 4 years. These declining resettlement rates encourage first-asylum countries to forcibly repatriate refugees to countries where they face serious danger. For instance, in recent years we have seen Tibetan Buddhists forced back from Nepal into the hands of the Chinese Communists, Iranian Christians and Bahá'ís back to Iran from Turkey. We need to reverse that trend and restore the American tradition of safe haven for the oppressed. In the words of President Ronald Reagan, the United States can and must be a shining city on a hill.

Finally I want to address those critics who suggest that by paying special attention to religious persecution we somehow diminish the importance of those who have suffered persecution for other reasons. Nothing could be further from the truth, and it is no accident that those in Congress who have been the strongest in their support of persecuted believers have also stood up for the rights of those who have suffered for their race because of their nationality or political opinions.

I do want to suggest, though, that religious persecution is deserving of special attention because totalitarian governments often come down harder on religious believers than anyone else. This is because nothing threatens such regimes more than faith. In the modern world, in which the rhetoric of culture relativism and moral equivalence is so often used to make the difference between totalitarianism and freedom seem just like a matter of opinion, the strongest foundation for the absolute and individual nature of human rights is the belief that these rights are not bestowed by governments or international organizations, but by God. And people who are secure in their relationship with God are not easily intimidated.

I will never forget once at a hearing of our Full Committee asking Shevardnadze how he endured all of those years in Perm Camp 35 and elsewhere in the gulag system; and he said, without blinking an eye, he meditated on the Psalms night and day. Others, Christians, Pastor Wurmbbrand, Pastor Couchee from Romania said identical things. It was the scripture and their thought and their belief about God that got them through such difficult situations.

So we must remind ourselves and then we must remind our government that human rights policy is not just a subset of trade policy and refugee protection. It is not just an inconvenient branch of immigration policy. The protection of refugees, the fight for human rights around the world, are about recognizing that good and evil really do exist in the world. They are also about recognizing that we are our brothers' and our sisters' keepers. If we recognize these truths, we can build a coalition to preserve and strengthen U.S. policies designed to protect our witnesses today and to protect all others who are persecuted because of their religion, race, nationality or political beliefs and to restore these policies to the place that they deserve as a top priority of U.S. foreign policy.

I would like to now ask our very distinguished panel of witnesses if they would present their testimony to the Subcommittee.

Let me begin, first of all, with Gyaltsen Wongmo, a Tibetan Buddhist nun who fled her home in 1985 in search of religious freedom. She currently lives in retreat.

Our second witness today will be Parhat Yasin, a Muslim leader and refugee from China, formerly from East Turkestan. In July of last year, his 23-year-old brother-in-law was executed by the Chinese Government for participating in a religious demonstration.

Ludvica Bukhsh is a Christian from Pakistan, a relative of the late Bishop John Joseph. She worked to support the civil rights of religious minorities in Pakistan before leaving that country with her family in 1994.

Eliezer Veguilla is a medical doctor from Cuba, arrested in 1994 for his activities as a Christian leader and Evangelist. He was subjected to harsh imprisonment and psychological torture by the Cuban Government. He and his family were forced to leave Cuba in 1995.

And, finally, Firuz Kazemzadeh is the Secretary for External Affairs of the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the United States, a professor emeritus of history at Yale University and the author of numerous books and articles. He is a noted expert on the religious repression of the Baha'is in Iran.

Mr. SMITH. If you could begin.

Ms. DECHEN. I am Ama Lobsang Dechen, translating testimony of Gyaltsen Wongmo. We are from India. All of our friends are behind us sitting in a row. Her English is not very good, so I am going to be reading on behalf of her.

STATEMENT OF GYALTSSEN WONGMO, TIBETAN BUDDHIST NUN

Ms. WONGMO. [The following testimony was delivered through an interpreter.] Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman, and Members of the Committee, for the chance to speak about the facts of religious persecution in Tibet.

My name is Gyaltsen Wongmo. I am a Tibetan Buddhist nun, originally from Tsangu nunnery in Lhasa, Tibet. I now live in India where approximately 1,000 of my sisters have found refuge. We are women who wish to live, work and study in accordance with the tenets of spiritual commitment. Our stories are in many ways alike.

Tibetans are a deeply devout people, and the Buddhist religion forms a significant part of our lives and our identity. Two of my uncles were monks from the great monasteries surrounding Lhasa. One was a Drepung lama and the other a Sera lama. By the time I was born in 1964, the Chinese had already dynamited their monasteries into rubble, and my uncles were serving long sentences in prisons simply because they were high lamas. Both were given 21-year sentences, one uncle at age 16, the other at the age of 19. They were young men who grew old and sick in prison.

As a little girl, I remember that all Tibetans were forbidden even to recite Om Mani Padme Hum, our most basic prayer which evokes the compassion for all beings and expresses the underlying principles of our faith. Neither could we offer butter lamps, as is our custom, or say pujas for the dead. Sometimes we would hide our butter lamps in buckets, but it was very dangerous.

I remember that when I was very small, my grandmother was tortured often, in front of many people during the local public meetings. Her teeth were knocked out, and a large part of her ear was torn off. The Chinese authorities tortured her because she was the mother of a high lama.

Although my family suffered greatly, it was the case of every family that someone had been taken away to the prison, tortured or killed by the Chinese. At that time, the authorities killed many dogs. They forced my grandmother to kill her dog. Had she not done so, they would have accused her of exercising her Buddhist faith which seeks to show compassion and respect for all sentient beings, which they considered a crime.

When I was 19 years old, in 1983, my own root lama, or principal teacher, was released from prison. It was he who advised me to become a nun. At that time, many girls wanted to join a nunnery. Communist policies were destroying our religious heritage, and we felt the need to save our traditions and to find refuge in spiritual practice. While the Chinese authorities claimed that we were free to practice our religion, we were not allowed to take vows from our lamas. So we—three nuns and 80 monks—had to receive our vows from our lama in complete secrecy in his house. Had the lama been

caught by the authorities, he would have been imprisoned and tortured.

The Chinese authorities permitted only 15 nuns at our nunnery, and we were never free of their control. Our first work was to repair our main prayer hall, which the authorities had been using for public and Committee meetings. There were no rooms to live, as they had been given over by the Chinese to serve as apartments for lay people. Any donations we received from the people were taken by the Chinese. During this time, I stayed with my uncle; and during the days I did prostrations in Lhasa, but other nuns had to earn money to rent living space by serving as common laborers.

Of course, we had little time to pray and meditate. We had no way to study, and no way to take our vows. We also knew that, at any time, the Chinese could change their policies and our nunnery could be disbanded. So in order to see His Holiness the Dalai Lama and receive his blessing, I escaped Tibet for India in 1985, leaving my parents and three sisters behind.

In India, our nunneries are poor and overcrowded, but we have freedom to study Buddhist philosophy from high lamas and receive teachings every year from His Holiness the Dalai Lama. However, I feel very sad all the time thinking of all of my Dharma sisters and brothers who are suffering from Chinese repression. Because of this, I have joined in peace marches to tell the people of the world that Tibetans need help.

I did a peace march last year in India, 745 miles, and this year marched from Portland, Oregon, to Vancouver, British Columbia, a distance of 360 miles. I marched not because I hate Chinese, I feel no hatred for them, but because I wanted to tell the world about the terrible situation in Tibet.

Even though I knew how bad the situation was in Tibet, I went home in 1992. I visited my nunnery and found that only one nun among my old friends was still there. The others had been expelled or fled to India. There were many new nuns, although there was still no opportunity to learn from elders.

Tibetan Buddhism is about developing the mind. It is impossible to develop the mind without teachings. In my old nunnery, there was not even an understanding of what vows could be taken. Instead of being allowed to study and receive teachings, the nuns were required to attend work meetings and perform manual labor run by the government and party authorities.

I live now in retreat in the mountains near Dharamsala. Many new nuns continue to come from Tibet, many of them victims of severe punishment and torture in search of peace and solace with their sisters. Many of them have been expelled from their nunneries because they refuse to denounce His Holiness the Dalai Lama and accept the Chinese-appointed Panchen Lama.

Since last year, the people of Tibet have not been allowed to have any portraits of His Holiness the Dalai Lama, which causes them great pain, for he is both the spiritual as well as the political leader. Others have fled Tibet in fear of imprisonment and torture. For those of us who have escaped, the process of healing the spirit and body is slow, and our memories of Tibet are always with us.

The Chinese teach us that religion is poison. Their plan for Tibet is the destruction of the Tibetan Buddhist culture. Because we Tibetans believe the law of Karma, we try to do something to stop the cycle of bad effect. So I raise my voice on behalf of the just cause of Tibet and ask you to continue your support for the negotiated settlement.

Thank you for the great privilege of addressing you today.

Mr. SMITH. I thank you very much, Gyaltzen Wongmo.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Wongmo appears in the appendix.]

Mr. SMITH. First of all, let me just say that, like many others, I was with you and met you yesterday at the rally on behalf of Tibet. And, hopefully, you can draw—both of you and others who have witnessed and endured so much—some inspiration from the fact that there is recognition of the plight of Tibetan Buddhism, monks and nuns, and that there is a growing awareness. I think, hopefully, it will build to a crescendo over the next several weeks and months of stern opposition, coupled with real policy on the behalf of the U.S. Government and other governments that are democracies.

I think this past weekend was truly a rallying point, and more people are aware now than there were last week about the hideous behavior by the Chinese Government.

I don't know how many people saw the Chinese Ambassador to the United States last week make the outrageous remark that those of us who are raising the flag of human rights and trying to promote common decency in China and in Tibet are somehow looking for someone to bash, that with the cold war over and the USSR no longer one of the egregious violators of human rights on the world stage, that somehow we need to find somebody else, that this is just a misguided attempt by Congress and interested human rights activists to focus on China and Tibet. Nothing, absolutely nothing could be further from the truth.

As a matter of fact, our Subcommittee will ask the Ambassador to China if he would like to come and meet our Subcommittee in open hearing and give an account for China's human rights abuses. He and other Chinese leaders—and certainly the people in this country who try to mitigate the outrageous behavior—try to put it in a positive light. We will offer a seat at the table for the Chinese Government officials to give us an account; and, hopefully, they will come forward in the next couple of weeks and do so.

We made a similar effort in outreach when the Defense Minister Chi Haotian came and made the outrageous statement that no one died at Tiananmen Square. Unlike the tyranny that went on each and every day in Tibet with few and almost no witnesses, all of the major media were there watching, filming, chronicling the abuse of the People's Liberation Army as they killed and beat those who were seeking democracy in the People's Republic of China.

And still Chi Haotian had the audacity to come to this country. He got a 19-gun salute and a red carpet treatment afforded to him by the Clinton Administration, which boggles the mind. But then he made the statement that no one died at Tiananmen Square. That is parallel to those who said there was no Holocaust.

And, thankfully, you bear witness to the holocaust and the genocide that is occurring in Tibet, and it is about time we all are further enlightened and motivated to take more effective action. So the invitation goes out to the Chinese Ambassador after his foolish statement that we are just looking for someone to bash.

Our Subcommittee, my colleagues in Congress, Democrat and Republican, we stand with the oppressed, not the oppressor. And the oppressor is the Chinese Government, given the genocide that they are perpetrating upon the people of Tibet.

So, again, I hope this past weekend gave you at least some hope and inspiration that more know. And hopefully knowledge is power, and people will take that knowledge and use it wisely to mitigate and, God willing, end these abuses.

So thank you very much for your great testimony and for your bearing witness today.

I would just like to say there is a Vietnamese Buddhist scholar. We had contacted him and had asked him to testify, and thankfully he is here. I was unsure whether or not he would be able to make it.

His name is Le Tan Buu. He is a former senator of the Republic of the Vietnam National Assembly. He spent 13 years in Communist prison, in concentration camps; and he will be representing the HPC Council of Elders Overseas, a Buddhist organization. And if he could take his place at the witness table at this point; and we will proceed to our next witness.

Mr. SMITH. Mr. Yasin, the Muslim Uyghur.

STATEMENT OF PARHAT YASIN, RELATIVE OF VICTIM OF RELIGIOUS PERSECUTION

Mr. YASIN. [The following testimony was delivered through an interpreter.] Thank you.

Mr. Chairman, Members of Congress, ladies and gentlemen, my name is Parhat Yasin. I am a Uyghur from the Uyghur city of Ghulja, where people are being oppressed and killed and our religious freedom is being abused under a colonial rule by the Chinese Communist Government since 1949. I am here today to testify about religious persecution that happened to a young member of my family last year in my homeland. Chinese authority always tried all the means to cover up the tragic massacre event, which is unknown to anyone outside of the Uyghur city.

In the last few years, the Chinese Government intensified their cultural genesis in Eastern Turkestan. Musk is destroyed, Muskesco is banned and closed and even prohibited our people to celebrate our Ramadan festivals. Young people feel hopeless and drugs, alcoholism becomes part of their life. Therefore, there are increased religious educational activities among our young people in order to keep them away from drug and alcohol abuse.

There are more and more young people that have committed themselves to God. However, the Chinese Government controls our religions and prohibited people from practicing religion. In February, 1997, there was a peaceful demonstration carried out by Uyghur youths in my hometown Ghulja seeking for religious freedom and demanding human rights and racial equality. The Chinese

Government again treated these peaceful demonstrators with another bloody oppression.

The people who participated in the demonstration and those who were relatives of the participants were all arrested. The government claims there were only a few people who were injured. But I know that more than 100 people were killed, about 200 people were injured, and so many people were arrested.

Today, I would like to introduce my friend, Mr. Erkin Mamut. He is here and he is a victim of the Chinese Government's genesis of our culture and abuse of our religion. Thank you.

And so many people were arrested. Soon after that massacre event, among the Uyghur prisoners, 57 young Uyghurs were secretly frozen to death and another 27 people were publicly persecuted. Following the massacre event, the Chinese Government imposed the marital law in the entire Ghulja valley and many other major cities of eastern Turkestan. Military troops and polices started arresting thousands of Uyghur men, women and even children with the separatist and counterrevolutionary charges.

My brother-in-law was one of those who were arrested and executed after that demonstration for religious freedom. My close friends, Ghappar Talet, Abduhelil Mijit, Abliz Mijit, Kasim Hajim, Eisa Yusuf, Shawket and Tursun Mehmet, were all arrested for educating young people to believe in God; and nobody knows where they are kept or whether they are dead or alive now. It saddens me greatly whenever I think about my brother-in-law and my friends who are unjustly executed.

My brother-in-law was only 23 years old when he was executed on July 22nd, 1997. In the morning of that day, a policeman came to his parents' house. The policeman told his parents and his relatives that he will be brought to an open court at 8 a.m. and be executed at 10 a.m. They will be given only 5 minutes' time to see my brother-in-law prior to his execution.

His parents were shocked and could not dare to say a word because anybody who expressed discontent with the government's wrongdoing or who was against such governmental inhuman behavior received nothing but merciless oppression. With great courage they went to the prison to bid farewell to their son. What they heard from their son was, please, don't be sad. I am going to die because I have believed in God and sought justice for my people. I have no regret, because God, the Lord, is in my heart.

They were given only a few minutes, and long before they finished what they wanted to say, two policemen dragged their son into his prison cell. After his execution, his parents wanted to take his body back home, but the government refused. What kind of government treats their citizens like this?

Clearly, our Uyghurs are not treated like Chinese citizens. It is impossible for people, especially the ones who live with dignity, value justice and always seeks happiness for others to tolerate such oppression. Chinese Government has been hiding from the outside world, their colonial rule being exercised over entire eastern Turkestan people and what they had done to them. They always use "terrorists, separatists and counterrevolutionary" charges against peaceful demonstrators to hide their merciless oppression.

I ask the world community to stop the Chinese Government from doing wrongful things. If what the Chinese Government has been doing was right and if those Uyghur young demonstrators were indeed terrorists, then why did the Chinese Government not open their courts' doors to the public and allow the world community to see and judge if what they are doing is legal?

But the Fascist Chinese Government cannot do that. If they do, the world will find out who they really are. They don't want the outside world to know why those Uyghur youths held that peaceful demonstration. They don't want to show the public the torture that they conducted on those Uyghur demonstrators.

Ladies and gentlemen, if you seek justice and freedom and if you are willing to provide help to those who are being oppressed by a Fascist Government under a colonial rule, please listen to the cry of our Uyghurs and give them a helpful hand.

Mr. President, you are going to make your state visit soon, so here we sincerely wish that, when you step on the red carpet in the Tinananmen Square, please bear in mind all our innocent people's blood. Thank you very much.

Mr. SMITH. Mr. Yasin, thank you for your moving testimony.

Previously when I had seen that videotape that was provided to us on the mistreatment of the Uyghurs, I know I was moved. It is one thing to read about it. It is another to see the videotape copy of the repression. And your testimony today I think helps brings further scrutiny and light to this terrible repression of the Uyghurs. And, hopefully, President Clinton will hear, and will include a representation on behalf of the Uyghurs in his dialog with the Chinese leaders.

So thank you very much for your moving testimony.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Yasin appears in the appendix.]

Mr. SMITH. I would like to now ask Mrs. Bukhsh—

Ms. BUKHSH. Ludvica Bukhsh.

Mr. SMITH. OK. If you could please address the Subcommittee.

STATEMENT OF LUDVICA BUKHSH, SISTER OF THE LATE BISHOP JOHN JOSEPH

Ms. BUKHSH. Thank you, Mr. Chairman and respected Members, for inviting me to testify at this hearing.

I am a relative of Bishop John Joseph. Bishop John Joseph sacrificed his life on May 6th, last month, in protest against the blasphemy laws and the persecution of minorities in Pakistan.

My family had to flee from Pakistan in 1994 as the fundamental Muslims wanted to kill my husband, who had converted from Islam to Jesus Christ. He was once tied to the signal on the cherry crossing on the road. They stoned him. They wanted to kill him. He was saved, only by a miracle. Our house was ransacked, attacked by a mob of more than 300 people with all sorts of assault weapons. My husband had to stay for 2 years underground. We had no information of his death or life.

There is much more to add. I will continue later.

In the words of my son who was then 10 years old, we were forced to leave our motherland. Our faith there they could not stand. They wanted us to renounce our God and accept theirs as

our own. This could not be, so we had to flee, leaving behind our land, our home.

I am a victim of a society where religious persecution is progressing without any check. Left unattended, it will soon eliminate the Christians and other minorities in that part of the world. Another Holocaust is in the making.

I will restrict these few minutes to a brief summary of the systematic and organized persecution of religious minorities in Pakistan. Detailed information is available in the written testimony provided.

Pakistan laws are derived from the penal code established by the British more than 100 years before the creation of Pakistan. The purpose of these laws was to curb provocation to religious violence and protect the religious feelings of all citizens. These laws applied equally to all sects, groups and religions existing in the subcontinent at that time.

It is ironic that the same laws have now been amended to such an extent that they are now playing a major role in promoting hatred, vengeance, discrimination and persecution among the citizens of Pakistan.

Different governments, in their zeal to Islamize the entire Pakistani society, have turned a blind eye to the fundamental rights of their citizens. Their passion has led to serious abuse against the religious minorities. The rights of the minorities have been eroded step by step.

Assurances provided by Mohammed Ali Jinnah, the Father of the nation, that Pakistan would not be a theocratic state, that the state will not discriminate between cast or creed and that all will be equal citizens have been flouted.

Written assurances to the Christians by Zulfiqar-Ali-Bhutto, the elected Prime Minister of Pakistan, that nationalization of Christian schools, colleges and hospitals will not harm the Christian community, that the Christian character of these institutions will be maintained, have not been kept. Christians suffered enormously and forcibly, made to go into illiteracy.

The assurances that the blasphemy laws are not meant against Christians, assurances that the separate electorate will not harm the minorities were never fulfilled. Very subtly the minorities were marginalized and cut off from the mainstream.

For the past 2 decades, the minorities have been threatened by some well planned, deliberate moves of the ruling authorities. Christians have been progressively deprived of their basic human rights. They have been reduced to the status of second-class citizens. Laws have been implemented which discriminate against them on the basis of religion.

The inception of Islamization and implementation of Islamic laws started an era of injustice, discrimination and persecution of the religion minorities.

To further complicate an already strained situation, the court adopted the Law of Evidence in 1984. Under this, the evidence of one male Muslim is worth the testimony of two Muslim women or two non-Muslim men. Along with this, Hadood ordinance was passed at the same time.

According to Haddood Ordinance, a woman complaining of rape is required to provide four male Muslim witnesses to prove her innocence. Otherwise, she can be convicted of adultery. The Islamic punishment for adultery is stoning.

These laws combined opened Pandora's box. Sexual harassment of Christian females, such as kidnaping, abduction, raping and gang raping have become everyday events.

No government to date has taken any measures to stop the injustices born of the abuse of blasphemy laws, the tyranny these laws are inflicting on individuals and the divisions and bitterness they are creating in the society.

Blasphemy cases are tried in an atmosphere of extreme aggression and intimidation created by the local religious groups. Members of these groups throng the courts inside and out, chanting religious slogans, stirring up public sentiment, freely exhibiting guns, uzis, knives, daggers, sticks and demanding the death of the accused.

In this volatile atmosphere, it is impossible for the judges to remain impartial. No lawyer is willing to defend the accused. The judges react emotionally to these cases, and their brazen disregard of established evidentiary standards in handing down convictions and sentences reveal a strong religious bias. What is worse, it is legally required that the judge of a blasphemy case must be a Muslim. It is evident that the accused never has a fair trial.

For example, Judge Talib Hussain, during the trial of a blasphemy case of Gul Masih—(Masih means Christian; it is not a last name)—after declaring two out of three eyewitnesses hostile, based his verdict of death sentence on the sole testimony of the complainant. In his opinion of the case, Judge Talib Hussain stated: "Sajjad Hussain, persecution witness is a young man of 21 years, student of 4 years with a beard and outlook of being a true Muslim and I have no reason to disbelieve him."

Once someone is accused of blasphemy, even if the higher courts acquit him, the accused has no safety in Pakistan as the public, considering it a religious obligation, takes it upon themselves to kill him with their own hands. Anyone who kills an alleged blasphemer is treated like a hero. The police are very reluctant to register a case against the killer. In fact, they treat him with respect, kissing his hands and praising him for being a devout follower of Islam.

Religious parties and influential people see to it that he is not punished. If arrested by chance, he is easily released. Lawyers offer their services free of cost to defend him. The entire case is quickly concluded.

On the other hand, in the case of accused blasphemers, one man accused of blasphemy was poisoned in prison and killed. Another was beaten up so badly by the police that almost all his bones were broken. He died in police custody. While yet another was stabbed in the police station in front of the police. While yet another was beaten up in front of his school staff, stabbed to death and no one intervened.

The list goes on and on. No one, no one to date has been convicted or sentenced for killing an alleged blasphemer. The govern-

ment not only condones these instances, rather, directly or indirectly, supports them.

For example, lately, a representative of the ruling Muslim League and son of the late Zia-Ul-Haq, Mr. Ejaz-Ul-Haq, representing the government at a conference along with 30 other religious Muslim groups in Pakistan declared: "Even if Bill Clinton and the entire world tries to pressurize us, we will not repeal or amend the blasphemy laws."

They further declared that Moslems within and outside Pakistan would punish a blasphemer with their own hands if the courts acquit them.

Another minister of the same ruling party said about the situation that developed after the death of Bishop John Joseph that "It is a conspiracy of the Christians and Jews against Pakistan."

Many participants of a procession mourning the death of Bishop John Joseph have been arrested under the blasphemy laws as a roadside billboard, allegedly having a Koranic verse on it, fell down while the procession was passing by.

In the past month alone, 600 Christians, participants of a peaceful procession, were arrested by the religious-biased police for vague, concocted reasons.

Recently in Karachi, two policeman opened fire on a group of Christians standing outside a church. Four Christians died on the spot, including a young child of 8 years. To date, no case has been registered against the police.

In February 1997, among others, a village of 2,000 Christian families was burned to ashes by a mob of 40,000 Moslems assisted by the local police. The world did not hear of it.

In May, just last month, while Christians of Faisalabad were attending the last rites of their beloved Bishop, Moslems burned down an adjacent Christian neighborhood. The police came after 2 hours and, instead of trying to disperse the mob, they started teargassing and firing on the Christian locality. What a great help.

During such barbaric mob attacks, Christian women are dragged naked through the streets. Women and girls are gang raped. Children and men brutally beaten, left with broken bones and other severe injuries. Houses are looted. Properties, vehicles and other material possessions completely ruined, burned and destroyed. Who is arrested, tried or sentenced? No one. No one. Because they are not Christians, because they are not a minority.

There are too many atrocities to mention here. The time is limited.

All this is happening in the name of Islamization. Let the government bring about Islamization in a way where there is no corruption, no bribery, complete honesty, where in the name of religion the poor and powerless minorities will not be discriminated against, marginalized, oppressed and persecuted. The minorities would surely not object to this.

When states build walls between people, they create prisons in which the human spirit is crushed. The Christians and other minorities are determined to save Pakistan and democracy. The authoritarianism, fundamentalism, sectarianism and theocracy shall no longer be tolerated. The door of the United Nations is open. It is possible this door could be knocked on very soon.

America, you are the flag bearer of peace and human rights. You have been entrusted with this responsibility by God. Please do not hesitate to help the helpless and oppressed minorities.

The sacrifice of Bishop John Joseph and the others who have died for this cause is a beacon for us. A death of grace and glory is worth more than a lifetime as a poor, powerless and helpless minority. Thank you.

Mr. SMITH. Thank you very much for your excellent testimony.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Bukhsh appears in the appendix.]

Mr. SMITH. I would just advise other Members of the Subcommittee who will be looking at this record, I appreciated it when Bishop John Joseph died and you immediately got on the phone and contacted us and underscored the need to get the story of what is happening in Pakistan out. We have had hearings on the abuse of child labor in Pakistan, the soccer balls being produced, for example, by young children in circumstances often very detrimental to their health. We have had some testimony on the abuse of the blasphemy laws.

And what you are appealing for is tolerance, simple tolerance, unmitigated tolerance that if one chooses to practice his or her faith or to change faiths, that the full weight of a totalitarian state should not be brought to bear against that person, even if the state masquerades as a democracy in some quarters.

So I thank you for your testimony, and we will have some questions later on, but I do thank you very much for that.

Ms. BUKHSH. Thank you.

Mr. SMITH. For our next witness we have Dr. Veguilla, who is a medical doctor from Havana, Cuba. If he could present his testimony at this point.

STATEMENT OF DR. ELIEZER VEGUILLA, CUBAN RELIGIOUS LEADER AND TORTURE SURVIVOR

Dr. VEGUILLA. [The following testimony was delivered through an interpreter.] Mr. Chairman and all the Members of the Subcommittee, it is a privilege for me to be here this morning to offer my testimony, lending my voice to those who are voiceless, to men, women and children who through all the years have suffered a totalitarian dictatorship, a dictatorship that has been characterized for violations of the most fundamental human rights, and particularly in persecuting Christian churches and all of their diversity, discrimination, blackmailing, penetration, imprisonment, and killings.

From a very early age I suffered some of these efforts by the regime. I remember those moments when I felt that perhaps God had left Cuba. My father, along with 48 other Christian pastors, was imprisoned. Many young people were sent to concentration camps. Many were executed, and thousands disappeared in the high seas. Many were expelled from our land. Today we suffer in exile.

I was 7 years old when I began to learn all these things. All of them had a great impact on my life, and I do not stop from wishing freedom for my country, for my country to learn the truth. And that was the crime, to wish that my people who I would become acquainted with, would know Christ.

In 1994, I went to prison with the charge of being an enemy agent, specifically a CIA agent. According to the secret police, I was one of the CIA agents responsible for destabilizing the country. And I was also charged with trying to harm the Cuban nation by distributing enemy propaganda. I was also charged with rebellion and sabotage with explosives.

Those were the charges, and they constantly asked me to plead guilty. When I failed to acknowledge my guilt, they tortured me. I endured both psychological and physical torture, not only against me but also upon my family. Very long interrogations without any rest. I was in prison in very dark cells or cells with very strong lights, cells that were either extremely hot or extremely cold. I suffered beatings by other prisoners.

I was threatened with a death sentence by execution. I was tied up by my feet, and was introduced in a hall full of excrement. And they kept shouting: "Tell us that God does not exist."

I was threatened with being put together with wild animals. The colonel, one of the chiefs at the Villa Marista headquarters in Havana, took me to the basement of this building and through a small hole, showed me a big black bear. The bear was very upset, and he was running around loose. He told me that unless I would plead guilty, they would put me in this room with the bear. I could not believe what was happening.

A few hours later, they, in fact, put me together with this bear. Fortunately, at that time the bear was tied up.

The whole exercise was an intimidation effort. They thought I was crazy because I began to praise God, and I began to pray to my God, and I was singing, and I stayed there several hours. I will never be able to forget what happened.

It was later that they took me to a small room where there were two men that were yelling, "They are going to kill us." And I said, "I came here to die." I thought I was going to die. Then they took one of these men away. I heard the bullets and the cries. Then they took me away. There was a pole, there was blood around it, and there were the impacts of the bullets on the wall, and there were soldiers with their rifles. They tied me to the stick. I began to shout, "Cuba for Christ! Assassins, Christ loves you." I heard the commander say, "Fire." And then I heard the arms. They began—then I heard laughter. Then they took me to another prison.

My children and my wife were interrogated; were intimidated at all times as if we were criminals. And in view of the large international pressure, and what I consider a mistake on their part, I was put under house arrest without having appeared before a court, and without having the opportunity to see a lawyer.

I have documents that prove what I am telling you. I cannot bring you the bear, but I could bring some of the evidence and the truth of my testimony, because the secret police always told me that no one would believe me. And what is really sad is that this not only happened to me. I am here today to speak out, breaking the silence, a silence that sometimes becomes an accomplice. But we are breaking the silence and I hope that—I am sure that the winter that covers the island of Cuba under the control of a madman and his followers will be over.

Mr. Chairman, I only hope that the flame of hope will remain and that this great country that took my family in and so many thousands in giving us the necessary refuge, will keep this flame of hope on.

My case is not special at all, but we are here to speak of recent cases, as the case of Samuel Valdez, May 20, 1997, who went on a missionary journey, and never returned home. His body was found floating on a river.

Also the voice of Manuel Rodriguez, charged recently for excess of religiousness and was given five electroshocks as well as hypotropic drugs. Today he is in a mental hospital recuperating in Havana.

I cannot consider this as an isolated case because it is the repression that today exists in my country.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. SMITH. Thank you very much for your moving testimony and for breaking the silence.

[The prepared statement of Dr. Veguilla appears in the appendix.]

Mr. SMITH. It seems every couple of months, certainly every couple of years, more evidence comes forward that Cuba has not changed, contrary to popular myth, that it continues to be very troublesome, that the Clinton Administration, under the Clinton-Castro agreement, continues to return those who seek to escape, the rafters, back to a very uncertain and potentially fraught-with-danger fate.

You indicated that the secret police did not believe you. The only reason you are here is that we believe you, and we take great pains to ensure that witnesses are credible, that the information that they bring forward is true and consistent with the situation as it exists.

I want to make it very clear that the Subcommittee not only believes you but is very appreciative of your bringing this information forward, especially at a time when there are a number of Members of Congress and certainly people in the Administration who see Castro in a more benign light. Certainly he does not deserve it and continues to repress anyone who steps across a very closely circumscribed line. Thank you for breaking the silence.

I read Armando Valledares' book years ago, "Against All Hope", and was greatly moved by his witness to the desecrations that he endured to his physical person and his mind. And I want to thank you for bearing witness to the truth, for enduring.

I am a believer. I am a Christian, a Catholic, but I believe tolerance is the key, that whether it be in China or the mistreatment of the Uyghurs or the Pakistanis or the Bahá'í or Catholics or Evangelical Christians, governments have a duty and responsibility to tolerate and not to repress. Thank you very much for our testimony.

I would like to ask our fifth witness, Dr. Kazemzadeh, who also is a Secretary for External Affairs of the National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'i, to present your testimony at this point.

STATEMENT OF FIRUZ KAZEMZADEH, SECRETARY FOR EXTERNAL AFFAIRS, NATIONAL SPIRITUAL ASSEMBLY OF THE BAHÁÍS OF THE UNITED STATES

Mr. KAZEMZADEH. Thank you Mr. Chairman. It gives me great pleasure to convey the gratitude of the American Baha'i community for the leadership of the U.S. Congress in championing the rights of the Baháí religious minority in Iran.

The Chairman and the Ranking Minority Member of this Subcommittee, Representatives Smith and Lantos, have been instrumental in the passage since 1982 of seven congressional resolutions calling for the emancipation of the Iranian Baháí community.

Together with annual U.N. resolutions condemning Iran's treatment of the Baháí's, the congressional resolutions have cast the a spotlight of international censure on the Iranian regime and helped to dissuade it from continuing the bloody pogrom against the Baháís.

The status of the Baháí's in Iran is unambiguous. Classified as "unprotected infidels", the approximately 300,000 members of the Baháí faith have no legal rights. Killing a Baháí does not constitute homicide. A Baháí may not legally enforce a contract, inherit property, be employed by the government, collect pensions, or attend universities. Baháís are routinely jailed, and their personal properties are confiscated.

A secret government document published in 1993 by the U.N. Commission for Human Rights confirms that anti-Baháí actions are part of the Iranian Government's deliberate policy. Produced by Iran's Supreme Revolutionary Cultural Council and endorsed by the Supreme Leader Ayatollah Khomeini, this "blueprint" sets forth guidelines for dealing with "the Baháí question" so that the Baháís' "progress and development shall be blocked."

Of course, Jews and Christians have also suffered persecution at the hands of the current Iranian regime. A week ago a senior member of Iran's Jewish community was condemned to death by hanging for assisting his co-religionists to leave the country.

As of today, 16 Baháís are in prison because of their religion. Four of the prisoners are on death row, two of them on charges of apostasy. Arbitrary arrests occur regularly in many parts of the country.

Last month, authorities in Mashhad surrounded and raided the home of a Baháí family where a class for youth was being held. The teacher, Mrs. Sonia Ahmadi, and the owner of the house, Mr. Manuchehr Ziai, along with 12 students aged 15 and 16, were arrested and hastily sentenced without having a chance to engage a lawyer. The two adults were sentenced to 3 years' imprisonment, while the 12 students were released on parole, having been given, despite their age, suspended sentences of 5 years' imprisonment to be activated should they ever again commit the "crime" of taking part in Baháí moral education classes.

In Birjand, Mr. Jamaledin Hajipur and Mr. Mansur Mehrabi were arrested last year and sentenced to 2 years' imprisonment. They appealed, and the Court of Appeals returned an extraordinary verdict confirming the sentence. The Appeals Court stated that "Baháism is recognized as an illegal organization," thus making a

mockery of the Iranian Government's claim that Baháís retain their right to the observance of their religious beliefs.

It is startling that the court judgment accepts as evidence of illegal activity such actions as holding classes for Baháí youth in the English language, science and technology. The verdict notes without embarrassment that the two men carried out these activities, "with the intent of improving the standard of education of Baháí students and their families."

The context in which the court decision should be seen is that the Iranian regime has excluded Baháís from higher education solely on the ground of their religious affiliation.

We have been asked whether there have been any changes in the attitude of the government toward Iran's Baháí citizens since President Khatemi took office. We regret that, despite our initial hopes, events such as those mentioned above demonstrate that there has been no discernible improvement.

For a Western mind, it is difficult to understand why a regime which is gradually permitting a degree of pluralism in political and social life should be bent on suppressing an apolitical minority that threatens no one or to understand why other voices in Iran's political spectrum would likewise be unwilling to grant even minimal civil rights to Iran's Baháí citizens. The explanation lies in the sinister interaction of political opportunism and unexamined religious prejudice that determine all aspects of this matter.

The current circumstances should be seen in the context of the unique nature of the persecution to which Iranian Baháís have been subjected for over a century. The Iranian Baháí community has frequently served as a scapegoat used by various factions struggling for political ascendancy. This has been the case regardless of the changes in political or dynastic regime. Whenever political leaders have felt a need to divert public attention from some issue, they have found the Baháí community an easy target because of the senseless hostility and prejudice inculcated in the public by generations of ecclesiastical propaganda.

Only 2 weeks ago, the Iranian state news agency cited a 1986 declaration made by the Al-Azhar University in Cairo, the most prestigious educational institution in the Muslim world, to the effect that "any Muslim adopting the faith of Baháísm would be considered an apostate." The news article stated that the Baháí faith "is false and it has nothing to do with Islam, or even with Judaism or Christianity."

The belief that Muhammad was the last prophet of God and that with him divine revelation came to an end underlies the continued persecution of the Baháís in Iran in spite of the Baháí acknowledgment of the divine origin of Islam and other religions.

The Government of Iran has repeatedly stated that the Baháí faith is not a religion but a political conspiracy. To recognize the Baháí faith as a religion would, therefore, be tantamount to denying the principles of Islam as understood by its clerical hierarchies.

To sum up, we see no evidence of a change in policy toward Iran's Baháí minority. They are outside the rule of law and not protected under the constitution. They continue to be imprisoned and mistreated in an effort to compel them to recant their faith and to convert to Islam. There is no evidence that the secret plan adopted

by the Supreme Revolutionary Cultural Council for the extermination of the Bahá'í community has been abrogated or withdrawn.

The 1997 U.N. General Assembly resolution on human rights in Iran offers the clearest expression of what the international community expects of the Iranian authorities. Any relaxation of pressure in the Bahá'í case or any omission of reference to it in the U.N. resolutions would have the inevitable effect of encouraging factions within the regime to compete with one another in demonstrating their determination to root out "the Bahá'í heresy." The effect would be to jeopardize the achievements of the international community, first of all the United States, in protecting the beleaguered Bahá'ís from the most brutal forms of repression.

It is not the actions of the Bahá'ís but the circumstances of Iranian history that have conspired to make "the Bahá'í case" a litmus test of sincerity for Iranian public figures who represent themselves as voices of reform and progress.

We call upon the Government of the United States to continue playing a primary role in defending the principles of religious freedom and all human rights throughout the world.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. SMITH. Thank you very much for your testimony, Doctor.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Kazemzadeh appears in the appendix.]

Mr. SMITH. Again, this Subcommittee, both under Democratic leadership and Republican leadership, has consistently raised the issue of the Bahá'ís vis-a-vis Iran.

I will never forget when President Rafsanjani came into power. There were people who suggested somehow that he was a moderate and that things would change. Regrettably, we were all rudely awakened that nothing could be further from the truth. Now we are hearing the same kind of rhetoric about the moderation of President Khatemi; and the evidence thus far has been less than favorable, as a matter of fact it has been decidedly the other way.

I thank you for bringing the continued plight of the Iranian Bahá'í to this Subcommittee's attention.

I would like to begin with some questions. Sister, if I could ask you first, and can we have our interpreters sitting near the witnesses?

On June 13, in *The Washington Times*, in an article written by Lance Gay of the Scripps Howard News Service, Ambassador Li insults and I think absolutely belittles those of us who raise human rights issues regarding China and Tibet. And he says, and I quote, Mr. Li says congressional criticism of China's Government and politics is coming from a few lawmakers who are nostalgic for the old days of cold war confrontation with the Soviet Union. They found that they still needed an enemy. They still needed a target so as to justify their cold war mentality. Because these people were so keen to find an enemy, to find the substitute for the Soviet empire in the past, they have started to look at China.

I would just say for the record, I have been in Congress now for 18 years, nine terms. I have raised—and I am not alone in this at all—the issue of human rights abuse in China, whether it be forced abortion and forced sterilization or the continued crackdown on re-

ligious believers or the outrage we saw in Tiananmen Square, which was just a microcosm of what goes on daily in Chinese life.

I would like our two witnesses, if you could, to respond to that incredibly superficial read of congressional concern. We are not here, we are not conducting this hearing on religious repression, to spin our wheels. It is because there is a sad, dismaying and untold story from disparate areas of the world and from people who have suffered this outrage, and yet we get this shallow, superficial, and I think contemptible, statement by the Ambassador.

And then the business community rolls in, and there are some perhaps that are in this room who represent business interests in China, and they give aid and nurturing to the Chinese dictatorship.

I will never forget, I have led three human rights trips to China. I met with American business people who are probably very, very good business people. And when we talked about human rights, they suggested that constructive engagement was working, that religious freedom indeed exists. It does not. And I asked them if they ever met with anyone like Wei Jingsheng, who at that time had not been rearrested. I had met with him, and if I can meet with him with less than a week to stay in China, why hadn't they? At least get the other perspective.

Already we are seeing a massive lobbying effort by the business community to try to continue most-favored-nation status for China, which may be continued for another year, regrettably. The business people just look askance and act as if they are not part of and party to these Nazi-like repressions of people.

Ambassador Li, again, will be invited to this Subcommittee to give an account; and if he rejects it, we will put an empty chair there again as we did with Chi Haotian, the Defense Minister, and hopefully bring further attention to the abuses by the Chinese leadership.

We are not at war or in opposition to the Chinese people or the Tibetan people. Our dispute is with their government, which is at war with its own people.

Let me just ask if you would respond to Ambassador Li's statement that somehow we need an enemy. I am not looking for enemies. I am looking for friends. I wish we had a strong trading relationship with China, and that, at its core, human rights were respected.

Ambassador Li, I think, when he makes these kinds of foolish and contemptible statements, hurts his own cause, because it further brings the light of scrutiny on how misguided they truly are and how cynical they are about our concerns about human rights. I think he owes us an apology. I will invite him to testify as soon as possible.

Let me ask you to respond to that, Sister, Mr. Yasin. In responding, have things, in terms of human rights, gotten better or worse with regard to the Uyghurs and with regard to the Tibetans?

Ms. WONGO. Human rights in Tibet are getting no better. In fact, it is getting worse. I came to India in 1985. Then I went back to Tibet in 1992. I have seen that Tibet, it is in a state of controversy, and many Tibetans are in exile.

We meet many Tibetans in India. They say that human rights in Tibet are not better.

For example, when I went to Tibet, people do not trust one another. There is always a spy among the people.

When I went to visit my parents and my relatives, they said, first of all, when we met, they said please keep quiet, don't speak too much.

I recently heard that there are many civilian-dressed police working among the public. Some people say for each person there is a spy looking after the Tibetans, what they are doing.

Thank you so much.

Mr. SMITH. Mr. Yasin.

Mr. YASIN. As testified, our Tibetan sisters and the similar situations going on in our region, but even worse because our homeland, the problem issues are not internationalized. So Chinese Government takes advantage, and evidence shows that they won't improve the human rights in our land.

I would like to thank you very much for listening to my testimony here, ladies and gentlemen. I sincerely hope that the U.S. Government will lend a hand to us, to our suffering people.

Mr. SMITH. Mr. Yasin, in July, late 1997, one of the Uyghurs who testified before our Subcommittee suggested that the Chinese Government waited until after most-favored-nation status had been renewed before executing a number of Uyghurs. In other words, once it was safely in the book and for another year, that is when they took the protesters that they had picked up before the renewal and killed them. Could you respond to that?

Mr. YASIN. Constructive improvement of the human rights together with trade is, it sounds like they quite contradict each other. Because, first, we should think that the Chinese Government should improve their record of human rights in our area, not only in our area but also Tibet and in Mongolia. I strongly hope that the United States should put more emphasis before they do any for the trade issue.

Mr. SMITH. Sister Wongmo, the U.N. Population Fund in New York and their representatives in Beijing have repeatedly said publicly, in fora that were held here on Capitol Hill on national television, and Dr. Sadik, who is the executive director of that organization, has said that the population control program in China is totally voluntary. Is that true in Tibet? Is that true among the Uyghurs, that forced abortion and forced sterilization do not exist?

Mr. YASIN. Absolutely, this again is Chinese Government's lying to the world. We have a lot of evidence to show that Chinese Government actually indeed practices abortions, pregnant women, and even sterilize the women.

Mr. REES. Is that against their will or is that voluntary on the part of the women?

Mr. YASIN. The Chinese Government is against our people's will. They force abortions.

Mr. HUJI TUERDI. One of our brothers just came from Kazakhstan. According to his statement, the Chinese Government established a hospital. It is a station for protection of women. What they do is they bring up pregnant women from all the towns, countrysides. He saw hundreds of women. Every day they are forced to come from the countryside.

Then the hospital, nurses without any license for practicing medicine, they do abortion even for the 9 months. They allow women to suffer, because those people who exercise that medical practice, they don't know how to do that. Those people are forced to come to that station and stand in line.

That is not voluntary. There are soldiers. They refuse even though they know they get aborted at 9 months old.

Mr. SMITH. I thank you. Before you leave, leave your name. That way, we will have a record of who you are. If you have anything written on that in addition to that, please provide it to us.

Sister.

Ms. WONGO. This forced sterilization and abortions is a bad policy. It is not that people are willing to do it. This is false statement.

I have two relatives, women relatives, so one of my relatives has two children, one died because of an accident, a truck accident. She wanted a third child, but she is not allowed to give birth because they said, if you give a third child birth she will not get a ration card and no food. None whatsoever. That child won't get it. So it is as if forced.

Farmers, they have no right to cultivate things, what they want to cultivate. Chinese authority give the order. This time, you have to grow this cereal. Next time, you grow this cereal. The third, they have no choice. They have to grow that, whatever the authorities say.

When I visited Tibet in 1992, there are many people that don't have any food to eat. So whatever is grown on the field, they collect a tax and they have to give the grains to the government so there is no food left to eat.

The keeping of cows and sheep there is restricted. The people are not allowed to keep as much as what they want. If the number is over, if you have one extra animal, you have to kill that animal.

So for the people it is very difficult because, according to the number of their animals, whether you get the product or not, you have to give the projected tax to the government.

Even in the cities of Tibet, they have a lack of food. There is a large Chinese population in Tibet and all the work is given to the Chinese, and the Tibetans are left with no work, and that is why there is scarcity of food and income among Tibetans. Even in the prisons Tibetans have only once a month one chance to get the food to the prisoners; it is only one person who can go and meet them. This is important.

Thank you so much.

Mr. SMITH. When you take the transmigration issue of trying to displace indigenous people with Han Chinese, coupled with the flight of so many refugees, coupled with the mistreatment that you have just described, including forced sterilization and forced abortion, does this rise to the level of a genocide? Is this ethnic cleansing like we saw in Bosnia when people were just displaced? Is this genocide?

Would Sister Wongmo characterize what the Chinese Government is doing to the Tibetan people through its mutually reinforcing policies of forced abortion, forced sterilization, the transmigration of actually homesteading so many Chinese in Tibet? When you take it all together with the fact that so many have left

under extreme duress, have become refugees, does this constitute a genocide?

Ms. WONGO. That is their policy, to decrease that population, to decrease our population, and then it is very dangerous for our race. Also, it is very critical. Even to this day there are many young Tibetans who have no work, no income. So many young people have liquor and then they fight among each other, kill among each other. But the authorities are not bothered because they don't care about the Tibetan people.

Mr. SMITH. Dr. Veguilla, let me ask you with regard to Cuba, are Evangelical Christians being targeted and Evangelical pastors and ministers being targeted by Castro because they are not recognized by the government?

And, second, as a result of the Clinton-Castro agreement on repatriating the boat people or the rafters, have any Christians ended up in prison as a result of being returned, even if it is under the guise of some other lawbreaking?

Dr. VEGUILLA. Suffering and repression has encompassed all Christians in Cuba. The regime has now targeted Catholics, Evangelicals, all the groups. But all of them have suffered equally.

The very same day on which the Pope arrived in Cuba, many religious leaders were called in. They were brought over, the government and the authorities asked them to come in, and they were asked to close these homes or houses of prayer.

And, for instance, the chairman of the Baptist Convention of Cuba was brought in by the police. He was told that he had to close thousands of houses of prayer.

The aircraft that was shot down some years ago, in a way expresses what is behind your question. There were four young Cubans, three were Catholic and one was an Evangelical. Morales was an Evangelical.

The Holy Father John Paul II recently told the Cuban bishops in Rome the changes that he, the Pope, expected have yet to come. Among those Cubans who leave the island, the Cuban boat people, undoubtedly there is a sound group of our people. It is not unique to hear that a raft arrives empty on the shores of Miami, but many times in these rafts you find Bibles. And this is evidence that some of our people are being returned. We have reports of many who have been returned. And they are repressed, the target of repression on the island.

And others, like Father Sullivan, was expelled, because he distributed literature, specifically the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, was expelled. And we have the same situation with other leaders of Cuban ministries, foreign Cuban ministries that are expelled from the country.

In 1995, Mr. Ricardo Luna of Open Doors, a ministry that sends Bibles to countries in trouble, was expelled from Cuba, and he was not permitted to return. More recently, a group from the Baptist Association of Miami wanted to go to Cuba to establish links with its brethren on the island; and all of them were denied visas to enter Cuba. We do not see substantive changes in Cuba's policy toward religion.

Mr. SMITH. Let me ask a follow-up. The 1994 Clinton-Castro agreement, the boilerplate language said to use mainly persuasive

methods with regard to those who wanted to leave, and those I guess who returned. You mentioned that they, upon return, are targets of repression. I think we need to know—this Subcommittee and other committees of Congress and to investigate further if, indeed, the U.S. Coast Guard is acting to bring people back who are then targets of repression.

What kind of monitoring, what kind of work does the Clinton Administration do to ensure that each and every person who is forcibly repatriated, picked up on their way potentially to freedom and brought back—their Bibles still left on the raft—as you said, are not abused upon their return? Is there any evidence that the U.S. Government is doing anything to intervene, to carefully chronicle and monitor those people, after bringing them back?

Dr. VEGUILLA. It is very sad what is happening. Throughout the years the idea of charging a Cuban with being an undocumented alien was not the way Cubans were treated in the United States. I just returned from Nevada, and I found several undocumented Cubans there.

We did not have a problem earlier. The reason is that there was a law that protected and permitted, but that law is not in force today, and instead we have an agreement to return to Cuba. And we do have evidence, we have files that we could send to the Committee about specific cases of repression of people who have been returned to the island.

For example, the mailings that we send are opened by the government, and they put a stamp on the envelope indicating to the Cubans that the government is monitoring their foreign mail. We have more evidence. Many telephone calls are listened to. Those who returned to Cuba, when they returned they don't have any properties, because whatever they had found out has been given away in their absence.

It is extremely difficult to obtain a job because of the high unemployment rate. Among the baseball players that are returned from the Bahamas, one is a Christian Evangelical, and we have taped his statements denouncing the repression that he has received. And one of the most terrible facts is that he has a visa from the Nicaraguan Government to travel to Nicaragua and the Cuban Government will not allow him to leave. In fact, this is repression. They will not allow him to leave Cuba.

Another sad example is that, when they return, they are told that the U.S. Government asks them to put their names in this lottery to come to the United States. But there are only 20,000 visas a year, and they are not issuing all of them either.

A personal case is my sister's. She worked in many of my religious activities. And when she asked for an American visa, she was denied. We just don't quite understand—we do not really understand this policy of the government, and we suffer because of it, and we are very upset and very concerned. We see the return of Cubans with great concern.

Mr. SMITH. Let me just make one final comment. You might want to respond.

Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, when talking about Marxist Leninism, spoke of how at the core of it is militant atheism, not a God does not exist as opposed to a hatred of God. You testified that while

you were being tortured, your captors wanted you to say or to blurt out God does not exist. Richard Wurmbrand, when he talked about the infamous securitate and Ceausescu's prisons, said the identical thing was used against religious believers, this obsession with getting a statement out of a tortured prisoner that God does not exist.

This happened to you within years—just a couple of years ago. Is this kind of treatment being meted out in Castro's gulags today?

Dr. VEGUILLA. This is evident that it is happening. Nothing has changed.

What has happened, however, is that when people come out of the country, as in my own case, there is sort of pressure, blackmail, and they remain silent, in many cases in Miami, and other cities in which there are witnesses of much worse things than have the ones that happened to me.

I am here, but I have been threatened that they can take strong measures against my parents or me in Cuba, and against my church; and, therefore, I am concerned.

But we have a moral, ethical and religious commitment with my people to bear witness, to denounce; and, honestly, since I arrived in this country, I have tried to knock on every door. And we are not going to stop that. And I am extremely grateful to you for letting me speak here.

We had space in some institutions such as Freedom House and other institutions in the country. We have gone to several countries around the world, and we have spoken to religious leaders and with political leaders to denounce what is happening in Cuba.

One of the worst things that are happening in Cuba is the lack of morals in society. Even Fidel Castro has said in his public speeches that the Cuban prostitutes are the safest in the world. He has institutionalized prostitution, and he has degraded women. However, the image that he appears to project around the world is different; and all of this goes against the Bible and the moral principles.

For instance, he recently said that abortion was the best method of controlling births.

I am a doctor. In Cuba, there is no limitation on abortion. I did not practice that sort of medicine, because I did not want to get involved with abortion. And we are talking about great killings. Not as the abortion that is needed for health reasons. They are chosen, they kill them, and they finally kill them when they are outside the mother's womb. And the Prime Minister of a country promotes that! I believe that this is one of a great challenges to Christian faith.

Mr. SMITH. Thank you very much for your excellent testimony and the answers to those questions and for pointing out that the Pope has said that the reforms have yet to come.

There is a sense among some of my colleagues and some down at the White House that lifting sanctions today will lead to some kind of breakthrough, and the evidence you present suggests that this has not happened, is not happening now, and it might even be wishful thinking that that will happen in the future. So thank you very much for that testimony.

I would like to ask Ludvica: our U.S. State Department report on human rights practices for Pakistan states that Prime Minister

Sharif is a defender of religious minorities and actually hosted a Christmas dinner last year for 1,200 persons. Is this just lip service? Is this public relations on his part? Is the central government unwilling to protect Christians or is it unable to protect Christians from local extremists?

Ms. BUKHSH. Hosting a dinner for 1,200 Christians at the time of Christmas is nothing more than an eyewash. As a matter of fact, I just quoted what a minister of his government said about the circumstances that developed after the death of Bishop John Joseph. "It is a conspiracy of the Jews and the Christians against Pakistan."

You can get an idea from what the minister says about what the government thinks of the Christians. Another representative of his party says that under no circumstances are they going to repeal or amend the blasphemy laws. Then, they claim that if the government, or the courts do not punish the accused blasphemers, the Muslims are going to take it upon themselves to punish them in and outside Pakistan with their own hands. Does that show that the government is in favor?

Again, it was in the regime of Nawaz Sharif, as a matter of fact, that one of his ministers wanted to add a column, a space in the national identity card mentioning the religion of the cardholder. What does that mean? Does that sound familiar? Why should a national identity card state the religion of a person?

The government was determined to do it. They said, under no circumstances would they give in to the minorities, because minorities were protesting against it. It was only after months and months of rigorous demonstrations, imprisonments, hunger strikes and support from the NGO's and enlightened Muslims that the government was forced not to add this religious column to the national identity card. As a matter of fact, without letting anyone know, very subtly, it was still added to the national passport. This is discrimination.

The President of the country—as a matter of fact, Mr. Tarrar, he recently said there is no need and under no circumstances are we going to repeal or amend the blasphemy laws.

It is very easy for the governments to say that the rights of the minorities will be safeguarded. My question is, which rights? The minorities have no rights. Which rights are they trying to safeguard? There are no rights.

Minorities are every day claiming, requesting, begging, demonstrating, give us a combined electorate. The government has forceably, without the consent of the minorities, given the minorities a separate electorate. They have separated the minorities from the mainstream.

Now, can you imagine what happens if you are separated from the mainstream? You just die your own death. The minority representatives, if they want to contest for the National Assembly, have to contest this election from the entire country. If they want to contest election for the provincial assembly, they have to contest from the entire province. As a matter of fact, there isn't any constituency for them.

How is that possible? It costs millions. Minorities are poor. The government didn't even take into account the actual number of the

minorities in the country. Arbitrarily, they just fixed a few seats in the national assembly—four seats for the Christians, four seats for Hindus, one for Parsis, one for Ahmedies. Minorities have no representation in the senate.

And what is legislation without representation? Tyranny.

I mean, minority representatives have no real representation in the assemblies. I mean, if you have to contest an election from the entire country, the voters in different parts of the country don't even know who the candidate is. And when a minority representative is representing only the minority, elected representatives of the majority stay aloof from him because they have nothing to do with him.

Hence, what happens? The minority representatives have absolutely no support in the legislative process. They are just dummy representatives to show the world, yes, the minorities have representation. But are they able to do anything? Nobody listens to them. They are not even able to object to the discriminatory laws that are passed against the minorities in the legislature, in the assemblies. Who cares what the minorities think? Who cares what they feel?

Mr. SMITH. Let me ask, could you tell us what the circumstances were regarding your own leaving Pakistan? Does it have anything to do with your faith?

Ms. BUKHSH. My family, my two children, my husband, myself, we had to flee from Pakistan in 1994. My husband belongs to a very, very influential industrial Islamic Muslim family. He is a Saiyad, and Saiyads are considered to be descendents of Moham-med.

My husband, after he came to know Christ, decided to convert from Islam to Jesus Christ. My marriage was an arranged marriage. At that time, Islamization was not so much enforced. Zia-uh-Haq started implementing Islamization when he brought in the second martial law round about 1978.

As the people realized that my husband was no more a Muslim, life for my husband became difficult with each passing day. He owned a car dealership. His showroom was broken, attacked by the mullah, and the Islamic students of that place, totally ransacked, cars broken, windows broken, property totally damaged. Later they caught him and tied him to the signal, you know, the light signal that you have on the roads. They tied him and started stoning him. They wanted to put him to death.

They called him a murtid. We could not confess that he had converted. He kept on insisting no, no, I am a Muslim. I am not a Christian. He was only saved by a miracle of God, because God wanted him to get out of that country. It was just by chance that a police patrol came that way, and they stopped it.

When we went into the police station to report against the mullah and those people who were doing it, police realizing that this was a case where a Muslim person had converted, refused to file a case against the mullah whom we knew, we were naming him, but they said, it is a mob attack; we can't do anything.

My husband had to stay 2 years underground. Our house was raided by a mob of more than 300 people who had all sorts of assault weapons. When I tried to stop them from coming up, they

threw me on the stairs. I was walked all over. I was kicked in the stomach. My children were beaten up. They hid under the dining table. My mother came and fell at the feet of the people begging them not to harm the children. They kicked my old mother.

The next day, when I went to report this incident to the sector in charge of MQM, which is a very prominent political party in Karachi, he told me, woman, you are lucky that your husband was not at home. Three bullets were definitely for him. And I said, why are you doing this? What has my husband done? And they said, we know that he is a murtid. Murtid means one who has rejected Islam or the Prophet Mohammed. And I said, no, no, that is not true. He is still a Muslim.

And they said, all right, then bring your Islamic marriage certificate. I didn't have it. In order for anyone to get married to a Muslim, you have to have a Muslim marriage; and when you have a Muslim marriage, you say their creed and become a Muslim. And we could not ever do that. And I knew then that day that the whole system was against us. We could not win. Because if I showed them my Christian Catholic marriage certificate, it would prove that my husband had converted. They would put him to death. If I did not show them my Muslim marriage certificate, they would say, I was living in sin and, hence, stone me.

I had to pay through my nose to get documents made for my husband and make him escape from another airport without proper clothes, with no money, only a ticket. He landed in America on the 23rd of January 1994, with not even warm clothes and you know how bad that winter was. I had to escape one night with only a bag in my hand and the bare clothes that we were wearing, because our house was under constant surveillance.

I knew I would never see my mother again. I knew I would never see my sister again. My mother died last year. I couldn't go back. We came with only our bare clothes on our back. We couldn't bring anything. We couldn't.

It is not easy. It is a systematic, very-well-thought-out process, what is happening in Pakistan. Look, look what they are doing. They, first of all, nationalized our institutions. The Administration, the staffing, which was 100 percent Christian, was either removed or suspended or transferred.

Muslim Administration was brought in and, because of their attitude, their discrimination, schools and colleges that were turning out hundreds of Christian graduates every year now have no Christians at all. Christian children in these schools are discriminated against. Muslim children do not want to sit with them. They are not allowed to drink from the same source.

The Administration condones this. When Christians tried to demonstrate against this nationalization in order to get their institutions back, we were fired upon. Two people died on the spot. Does anyone know about it? No one.

Christians were considered pioneers in the field of education and medicine. The nursing profession had loads of Christian students—Christian girls and boys. What did the government do? They fixed a quota, only 2 percent Christians are allowed in this profession now.

They passed another law, known as the Law of Evidence, according to which a Christian or a minority member's evidence doesn't have any weight in comparison to a Muslim's. A Muslim's testimony is twice as worthy and credible than two Christians or two women.

Along with this, they passed the Haddood Ordinance, according to which a woman complaining of rape has to present four male Muslim witnesses to prove her innocence. Who gets raped in front of four men? This is crazy.

And then, according to another ruling of the court, if a minority woman or man converts to Islam, their marriage is automatically annulled. So what happens? This has opened Pandora's box.

Muslim men, very conveniently, whoever they like, whenever they like, just walk away with any Christian woman, with any Christian girl. She is kept imprisoned in their private jails, raped, kept there for a couple of months.

When presented in the court, a mullah from any remote place says she has converted to Islam, and the judge condones the entire matter and gives his verdict saying that as (if it is a case of a woman), she has converted, so she cannot go back to her husband, because he is a non-Muslim. If it is a girl, she cannot go back to her parents, because now she is a Muslim. She should not be living with non-Muslims.

What happens? Hundreds and thousands of Christian families have been broken. Children have become motherless. Daughters have been snatched away from their parents. Christian parents lose sleep at the birth of a daughter now. No Christian woman, or Christian girl feels safe.

This is only a beginning. This is not even 1 percent of what is going on. Look at the blasphemy laws. They were made in 1860, when the British were ruling the subcontinent. They were made to protect the religious feelings of any sect, class, religion, group of people, who were present at that time in the subcontinent.

They stressed that the malicious intent of the accused must be established in order for him to be accused of consciously trying to hurt somebody's religious feelings. But now, by the changes that they have made, they have totally eliminated this necessity. They are not concerned about the others' religion. They are not concerned about the feelings of a Christian or any other. They are only concerned with the honor and respect of the Islamic deity, the Koran and their Holy Prophet, Mohammed.

Whether you mean it or you don't mean it, whatever you say can be taken against you if the listener is a person who is very sensitive or who can be very easily provoked.

There is very little requirement of actual evidence. This is a non-bailable offense. Many people, fanatic Muslims, are making use of these laws to settle their scores. If they want your wife, they blame you. If they want your daughter, if you are competing in business with them, if they want your land, they don't want you in their neighborhood, whatever the reason—just one Muslim person has to say that he heard a non-Muslim say something against the Prophet, the police comes, arrests you, puts you in prison, and you may spend years of your life before you are tried—before you have any trial.

And then when you are tried, the judge is a Muslim. No lawyer is willing to fight your case. What happens? You don't get a fair trial.

One judge, I don't know how, he gave a ruling in favor of a young 13-year-old boy who was sentenced for death by the lower court. He said he did not have enough evidence to sentence this child. Last year, this judge was killed.

The courts are Muslim. The lawyers are Muslim. The judges are Muslim. And the poor Christian accused blasphemer is left at their mercy. Even if they get a chance to take the case to the high court and the high court overturns the decision, it is very difficult for the accused to have any security in Pakistan, because they are killed by the people.

Once you are accused of blasphemy, whether you have done it or you haven't, people take it upon themselves to kill you because this is their religious duty. Where do you stand? Where do you stand?

This is the beginning of another Holocaust. If this is left unattended, very soon Christians and other minorities will be totally eliminated from that part of the world. They will be forced to change their religion in order to safeguard their life. They cannot flee. They have India on one side who under no circumstances is ever going to let a Pakistani become a refugee in their country. On the other side is China, who is a very strong ally of Pakistan. The other side is Afghanistan and Iran, who want no non-Muslims in their countries.

Christians are poor people with no support, with no help. The only thing that they can do is to die at the hands of fundamental Muslims there or go and drown in the Arabian Sea in the south.

I request, I beg and I plead to the American Government not to condone this, please do not condone this. This is as treacherous, this is as forceful and disastrous as a nuclear bomb, because millions will be killed. Why should we be concerned only about a nuclear bomb and not about the persecution of minorities which is not only going on in Pakistan? It is definitely going on in many other Islamic states of the world.

Mr. SMITH. Thank you very much for that very extensive, but very insightful statement.

Ms. BUKHSH. I am sorry.

Mr. SMITH. No, you made your point very clear. And I think it needs to be made clear that our concerns vis-a-vis Pakistan shouldn't just be about the bomb; and, unfortunately, what goes on internally, even though it is a human rights abuse, very often is ignored or just brushed aside. So thank you. I think that was a very, very telling bit of testimony, and I think all of us are much wiser for it.

Let me just ask, Dr. Kazemzadeh, a couple of final questions for the hearing. Has the U.N. High Commission for Refugees, UNHCR, supported or assisted the forced repatriation of Iranian Baháís from Turkey? Or has it just been the Turkish Government that has forced those people back?

Dr. KAZEMZADEH. As far as I know, the UNHCR has not assisted in the deportations, but they have been a bit strict in their definition of who is a refugee. And if there were any problems it was in determining whether a person qualified as a refugee under their

rules and regulations. The U.S. notion of who is a refugee is much more liberal than the UNHCR notion.

Mr. SMITH. Have Iranian Baháís been sent back to prison as a result?

Dr. KAZEMZADEH. There have been a few cases which did not have enormously bad consequences. In other words, on their return to Iran, a few dozen Baháís who were deported from Turkey, were not executed. They were kept in jails for a period of time, but I have not heard of any executions.

Mr. SMITH. I mentioned earlier about President Khatemi and this notion in the west that somehow he is a moderate. What is your read on where he will take Iran in the coming months, perhaps years with regards to religious minorities, especially the Baháís?

Dr. KAZEMZADEH. On the whole, the political establishment is unanimous in their attitudes toward the minorities, particularly the Baháís. Because the Jews and the Christians at least are people of the book, and even though they are not granted equal rights, they are accorded rights as protected infidels. With the Baháís it is worse than that. Baháís are unprotected infidels, and their right to exist can be questioned and frequently is.

Within the establishment itself, right now, there is a very powerful clash of views, of opinions. The government, its policies are in flux, and it is very difficult to predict who is going to win, how things are going to turn out.

I mentioned in my statement that there has been no improvement as far as Baháís are concerned. I am glad to be able to amend this somewhat. Things have changed for some individual Baháís, in the sense that the inquisition is not quite as strong, and an individual Baháí engaging in private business, for instance, is not as badly threatened as before.

However, when it comes to the community, there is no relaxation. In other words, if a Baháí wishes to remain anonymous, does not advertise to what religion he belongs, if he is quiet and goes after his own business, he will largely be left alone. But if he tries to teach his children, if he organizes a class for Baháí youngsters, even teaching the English language to them, then, all of a sudden, there are arrests, jailings and accusations of apostasy as well, even directed at those who were born in Baháí families.

So it is a mixed thing. It is not quite as bad as it was in the early 1980's. But it is still extremely repressive and, most of all, for the Baháís.

Mr. SMITH. Thank you.

I want to thank our distinguished witnesses for giving us your insights and information today and to encourage you that there are many of us who will take this information and amplify it, ensure that others know about it, and hopefully make it mesh with policies that are prudent and will advance the ball for religious freedom and liberty. And the information that you provide is of extreme value, because we are able to let others know what is truly going on, rather than the gloss that is often given by perhaps well-meaning but misguided people, or by those who just don't care. And I want to thank you for your excellent testimonies and your answers to the questions.

And I would, without objection, include Mr. Buu's statement for the record. Unfortunately, he had to leave and couldn't testify. But his full statement will be made a part of the record as well.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Buu appears in the appendix.]

Mr. SMITH. The Subcommittee hearing is adjourned and thank you.

[Whereupon, at 12:35 p.m., the Subcommittee was adjourned.]

APPENDIX

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Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-3004

Statement of Representative Christopher H. Smith
Chairman, Subcommittee on International Operations
and Human Rights
Victims of Religious Persecution Around The World
June 16, 1998

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**COMMISSION ON SECURITY AND
COOPERATION IN EUROPE**
CO-CHAIRMAN

Today's hearing of the Subcommittee on International Operations and Human Rights is for the purpose of taking the testimony of five witnesses to religious persecution. These are not government officials or even analysts from non-governmental organizations. Rather, they are people who have witnessed religious persecution first-hand --- who have seen close friends or relatives imprisoned, tortured, even executed for their faith, or who have suffered such horrors themselves.

This is the latest in a series of Subcommittee hearings focusing in whole or in part on persecution of religious believers. Other hearings have focused on worldwide anti-Semitism, on the persecution of Christians around the world, on the 1995 massacre of Bosnian Muslims in Srebrenica, on the enslavement of black Christians in Sudan, and on the use of torture against religious believers and other prisoners of conscience.

We have heard from Palden Gyatso, a Tibetan Buddhist monk who displayed the instruments of torture used against him by his Chinese communist jailers by Tibetan Buddhists; from Hasan Nuhanovic, a Muslim who unsuccessfully begged United Nations peacekeepers not to turn his mother, father, and brother over to the murderous Bosnian Serb militia by United Nations peacekeepers; from a Russian Jewish member of parliament who observed that "anti-Semitism was the first industry to be privatized" in post-Soviet Russia; from Karen refugees whose villages in Thailand were burned by the Burmese military dictatorship, which openly used their Christian religion as an excuse to conduct cross-border raids against them; and from Christians and Buddhists subjected to imprisonment and torture by the Communist governments of China and Vietnam. Today's witnesses include a Catholic, a Protestant, a Muslim, a Buddhist, and a Bahai, all with compelling and recent evidence that religious persecution is not a problem that will go away if we just ignore it.

In their prepared testimony, several of today's witnesses make clear that the United States should continue to press for an end to religious persecution abroad. This is important, because the Clinton Administration and some business people who oppose the Freedom from Religious

Persecution Act have suggested that by publicly demanding an end to the mistreatment of these people, we are more likely to hurt them than help them. Personally, I believe it may be true in the short run that a totalitarian dictatorship used to being coddled by the United States government will react with anger when we suddenly insist that they behave in a civilized fashion. This is true whether the issue is religious persecution, nuclear proliferation, or anything else. In the long run, however, these governments will act in their own self-interest. If we send a strong and consistent message that the economic and other benefits of a close relationship with the United States can be expected to flow to a government if and only if that government treats its own people decently, we are likely to save lives and promote freedom in the long run. This message has already been sent by the overwhelming 375 to 41 House vote in favor of the Freedom from Religious Persecution Act. I hope that Senate passage and a Presidential signature will follow soon.

Whatever we do to other governments that persecute religious believers, it is also important that the United States put its own house in order. One way we can do this is to monitor and improve our treatment of refugees, with special reference to religious refugees. Unfortunately, in recent years the United States commitment to refugees --- both the amount we spend on protection overseas, and the number of refugees we admit to the United States --- has declined sharply. In the last four years, our State Department has asked for and gotten a raise for itself every single year. Yet the only major account in which the Department has not asked for an increase is the refugee account. The Administration's fiscal year 1999 budget request for refugees is \$63 million lower than the amount we spent in fiscal year 1995. The number of refugees admitted to the United States has gone down from 130,000 to 75,000 in only four years. These declining resettlement rates encourage first-asylum countries to forcibly repatriate refugees to countries where they face serious danger. For instance, in recent years we have seen Tibetan Buddhists forced back from Nepal into the hands of the Chinese Communists, and Iranian Christians and Bahais forced back to Iran from Turkey. We need to reverse that trend and restore the American tradition of safe haven for the oppressed. In the words of President Ronald Reagan, the United States can and must be a shining city on a hill.

Finally, I want to address those critics who suggest that by paying special attention to religious persecution, we somehow diminish the injuries of those who have suffered persecution for other reason. Nothing could be further from the truth, and it is no accident that those in Congress who have been strongest in their support of persecuted believers have also stood up for the rights of those who have suffered for their race, nationality, or political opinions. I do want to suggest, though, that religious persecution is deserving of special attention because totalitarian governments often come down harder on religious believers than anyone else. This is because nothing threatens such regimes more than faith. In the modern world --- in which the rhetoric of cultural relativism and moral equivalence is so often used to make the difference between totalitarianism and freedom seem like just a matter of opinion --- the strongest foundation for the absolute and indivisible nature of human rights is the belief that these rights are not bestowed by governments or international organizations, but by God. And people who are secure in their relationship with God do not intimidate easily.

So we must remind ourselves, and then we must remind our government, that human rights policy is not just a subset of trade policy, and refugee protection is not just an inconvenient branch of immigration policy. The protection of refugees, the fight for human rights around the world, are about recognizing that good and evil really exist in the world. They are also about recognizing that we are all brothers and sisters. If we recognize these truths, we can build a coalition to preserve and strengthen United States policies designed to protect our witnesses today -- and to protect all others who are persecuted because of their religion, race, nationality, or political beliefs -- and to restore these policies to the place they deserve as a top priority in American foreign policy.

**Testimony of Gyaltzen Wangmo
Subcommittee on International Operations and Human Rights
Hearing on Religious Persecution
Tuesday, June 16, 1998**

Thank you, Chairman Smith, and members of the Committee for the chance to speak about the fact of religious persecution in Tibet.

My name is Gyaltzen Wangmo. I am a Tibetan Buddhist nun, originally from Tsangu nunnery in Lhasa, Tibet. I now live in India where approximately 1,000 of my sisters have found refuge. We are women who wish to live, work, and study in accordance with the tenets of spiritual commitment. Our stories are in many ways alike.

Tibetans are a deeply devout people, and the Buddhist religion forms a significant part of our lives and our identity. Two of my uncles were monks from the great monasteries surrounding Lhasa. One was a Drepung lama and the other a Sera lama. By the time I was born in 1964, the Chinese had already dynamited their monasteries into rubble, and my uncles were serving long sentences in prison simply because they were high lamas. Both were given 21-year sentences, one uncle at age 16, the other at 19 years of age. They were young men who grew old and sick in prison.

As a little girl, I remember that all Tibetans were forbidden even to recite Om Mani Padme Hum -- our most basic prayer which evokes the compassion for all beings and expresses the underlying principles of our faith. Neither could we offer butter lamps, as is our custom, or say "pujas" for the dead. Sometimes we would hide butter lamps in buckets, but it was very dangerous.

I remember that when I was very small, my grandmother was tortured often, in front of many people, during the local public meetings. She was savagely tortured: her teeth were knocked out, and a large part of her ear was torn off. The Chinese authorities tortured her because she was the mother of a high lama. Although my family suffered greatly, it was the case of every family that someone had been taken away to prison, tortured or killed by the Chinese. At that time, the authorities killed many dogs and

they forced my grandmother to kill her dog. Had she not done so, they would have accused her of exercising her Buddhist faith -- which they considered a crime.

When I was 19 years old, in 1983, my own "root lama," or principal teacher, was released from prison. It was he who advised me to become a nun. At that time, many girls wanted to join a nunnery. Communist policies were destroying our religious heritage, and we felt the need to save our traditions and to find refuge in spiritual practice. While the Chinese authorities claimed that we were free to practice our religion, we were not allowed to take vows from our lamas. So, we--three nuns and eighty monks--had to receive our vows from our lama in complete secrecy, in his house. Had the lama been caught by the authorities, he would have been tortured and imprisoned.

The Chinese authorities permitted only 15 nuns at our nunnery, and we were never free of their control. Our first work was to repair our main prayer hall, which the authorities had been using for public and committee meetings. There were no rooms to live, as they had been given over by the Chinese to serve as apartments for lay people. Any donations we received from the people were taken by the Chinese. During this time, I stayed with my uncle, and during the days I did prostration in Lhasa, but the other nuns had to earn money to rent living space by serving as common laborers.

Of course we had little time to pray and meditate. We had no way to study and no way to take our vows. We also knew that, at any minute, the Chinese could change their policies and our nunnery could be disbanded. So, in order to see His Holiness the Dalai Lama and receive his blessing, I escaped Tibet for India in 1985, leaving my parents and three sisters behind.

In India, our nunneries are poor and overcrowded. But we have the freedom to study Buddhist philosophy from high lamas and receive teachings every year from His Holiness the Dalai Lama. However, I feel very sad all the time, thinking of all of my Dharma sisters and brothers who are suffering under Chinese repression. Because of this, I have joined in peace marches to tell the people of the world that Tibetans need help. I did a peace march last year in India--1,200 miles--and, this year, marched from Portland, Oregon, to Vancouver, British Columbia, a distance of 360 miles.

I marched not because I hate the Chinese--I feel no hatred for them--but because I wanted to tell the world about the terrible situation in Tibet.

Even though I knew how bad the situation was in Tibet, I went home in 1992. I visited my nunnery, and found that only one nun among my old friends was still there. The others had been expelled or fled to India. There were many new nuns, although there was still no opportunity to learn from elders. Tibetan Buddhism is about developing the mind. It is impossible to develop the mind without teachings. In my old nunnery, there was not even an understanding of what vows could be taken. Instead of being allowed to study and receive teachings, the nuns were required to attend "work meetings"--manual labor--run by the government and Party authorities.

I live now in retreat in the mountains near Dharamsala. Many new nuns continue to come from Tibet, many of them victims of severe punishment and torture, in search of peace and solace with their sisters. Many of them have been expelled from their nunneries because they refuse to denounce His Holiness the Dalai Lama and accept the Chinese-appointed Panchen Lama. Since last year, the people of Tibet have not been allowed to have any portraits of His Holiness the Dalai Lama which causes them great pain, for he is both the political and spiritual leader of Tibet. Others have fled Tibet in fear of imprisonment and torture. For those of us who have escaped, the process of healing the spirit and body is slow, and our memories of Tibet are always with us.

The Chinese teach us that religion is poison. Their plan for Tibet is the destruction of the Tibetan Buddhist culture. Because we Tibetans believe the law of Karma, we try to do something to stop the cycle of bad effect. So I raise my voice on behalf of the just cause of Tibet, and ask you to continue your support for a negotiated settlement. Thank you for the great privilege of addressing you today.

The Congressional Hearing on "Victims of Religious Persecution"

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| The Name of witness | : Parhat Yasin An Uyghur from Xinjiang Uyghur Region of China, also known as Eastern Turkistan/Uyghuristan before 1949 |
| The Organization affiliation | : Member of Uyghur American Association |
| Testifying in front of | : The Subcommittee on International Operations and Human Rights |
| The Time of the Hearing | : 10:00 a. m. on Tuesday, June 16, 1998 |
| The Location of the Hearing | : The Room 2172 Rayburn House Office Building |
| The Hearing on | : Victims of Religious Persecution |
| The Congressional Committee | : House Committee on International Relations |
| The Congressional subcommittee: | Subcommittee on International Operations and Human Rights |

Good morning Mr. Chairman, Members of Congress, Ladies and Gentlemen,

My name is Parhat Yasin, I am an Uyghur, from the Uyghur city of Ghulja, Uyghur people are being oppressed and killed; and our religious freedom is being abused under a colonial rule by the Chinese government since 1949. I am here today; to testify about religious persecution that happened to a young member of my family last year in my homeland. Chinese Government immediately covered up the tragic massacre event, which is unknown to anyone outside of the Ghulja city.

In last few years there were increased religious educational activities to young Uyghur people in order to keep them away from drug and alcohol abuse. There are more and more young people believe in God. However, the Chinese Government tightened its control over religious activities and prevented people from practicing religion. In February 5, 1997, there was a peaceful demonstration carried out by Uyghur youths in my hometown Ghulja, seeking for religious freedom and demanding human right and racial equality. The Chinese Government treated the peaceful demonstrators with another bloody oppression. The people who participated in the demonstration and those who were relatives of the participants were all arrested. The government claims only few people were injured. But I know more than 100 people were killed, about 200 were injured, and so many people were arrested. Soon after that massacre event, among the Uyghur prisoners, 57 young Uyghurs were secretly frozen to death; and another 27 people were sentenced to death and executed. Following the massacre event, the Chinese Government imposed the martial law in the entire Ghulja valley, and many other major cities of the Uyghur Region. Military troop and polices started arresting thousands of Uyghur men, women, and even children with the separatist and counter revolutionary charges.

My brother-in-law was one of those who were arrested and executed after that demonstration for religious freedom. My close friends, Ghappar Talet, a key religious leader, Abduhelil Mijit, Abliz Mijit, Kasim Hajim, Eisa Yusuf, Shawket and Tursun Mehmet were all arrested for educating young people to believe in God and nobody knows where they are kept, or whether they are dead or alive now. It saddens me greatly every time I think about my brother-in-law and my friends who were unjustly executed.

My brother-in-law was only 23 years old when he was executed in July 22, 1997. In the morning of that day, a policeman came to his parent's house. The policeman told his parents and his relatives that he will be brought to an open court at 8:00 am and be executed at 10:00 am; they will be given 5 minutes time to see my brother-in-law prior to his execution. His parents were shocked, and could not dare to say a word. Because anybody who expressed dissatisfaction with the government's wrongdoing, or who was against to such governmental inhuman behavior received nothing but merciless oppression. The parents almost lost their consciousness and with great courage went to the prison to say goodbye to their son. What they heard from their son was: "Please don't be sad, I am going to die because I believed in God and sought justice for my people. It is OK with me because God is always with me." They were given only a few minutes, and long before they finished what they wanted to say, two policemen dragged their son into his prison cell. After his execution, his parents wanted to take his body back home, but the Government refused. They were not even allowed to bid the final farewell to their loved ones. What kind of government treats their citizen this way? Clearly, we Uyghurs are not treated like Chinese citizens! It is impossible for people, especially the ones who live with dignity, value justice, and always seeks happiness for others, to tolerate such oppression. Chinese government has been hiding from the outside world, their colonial rule being exercised over Uyghuristan people and what they had done to them. They always use "terrorists, separatists and counter revolutionary" charges against peaceful demonstrators to hide their merciless oppression.

I ask world community to stop the Chinese government from doing wrongful things! If what the Chinese government has been doing was right and if those Uyghur young demonstrators were indeed "terrorists", then why did the Chinese government didn't open their courts' doors to public, and allow the world community to see and judge if what they are doing is legal? But the fascist Chinese government cannot do that. If they do, the world will find out who they really are. They don't want the outside world to know why those Uyghur youths held that peaceful demonstration. They don't want to show the public the torture that they conducted on those Uyghur demonstrators. Ladies and gentlemen, if you seek justice and freedom, and if you are willing to provide help to those who are being oppressed by a fascist government under a colonial rule, please listen to the cry of Uyghurs and give them a helpful hand. Thank you very much.

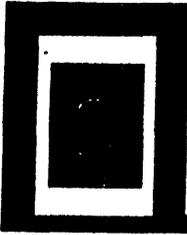
Sincerely,

Parhat Yasin

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Washington, D.C. 20024

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FREEDOM
A Human Rights Group

**Testimony before the Subcommittee
of International Operations and
Human Rights of the House
Committee on International
Relations**

June 16, 1998

**Victims of Religious Persecution
Ludvica Bukhsh**

Thank you, Mr. Chairman and respected members, for inviting me to testify at this hearing. Being a product of a society where religious persecution is progressing without any check, I will present before you chronological evidence of the systematic development of religious persecution in Pakistan. Left unattended, it will lead to the elimination of Christians and other minorities in that part of the world.

The Christians in Pakistan will never forget the day in 1942, when their leader Mr. S.P. Singha along with a few others met Mohammed Ali Jinnah (the founder of Pakistan).

While discussing the birth of a new country, Mr. Jinnah assured these representatives that the minorities in Pakistan would be free to practice their faith, and will have equal rights.

Singha thought that Moslems, having been deprived of basic rights by the Hindu majority, would be more sympathetic and understanding. They would realize that deprivation gives birth to revolt and thus would treat minorities better.

They assured Mr. Jinnah that the Christians would surely support Moslems in the creation of a sovereign state. Consequently, when voting was held the Christian representatives voted in favor of the creation of Pakistan, helping the Moslem League attain a lead by three votes and thus stamped the birth of Pakistan.

Pakistan was created on August 14, 1947. Addressing its first Constitutional Assembly in August 1947, Mr. Jinnah, the founder of Pakistan said:

“We are starting in the days when there is no discrimination, no distinction between one community and another, no discrimination between one cast or creed and another. We are starting with the fundamental principle that we are all citizens and equal citizens of one state.”

In a later address he declared the minorities a “sacred trust.”

Mr. Singha had a rude awakening when he was dismissed from the speakership of the Pakistan Provincial Assembly, on the grounds of being a non-Moslem.

Mr. Jinnah was shocked by this dismissal, but he found himself totally helpless at the hands of the Mullahs (Islamic teachers). Unfortunately, he did not live long enough and his promises died with him in 1948. He was lucky not to witness the atrocities his “sacred trust” has had to face in “The Land of the Pure” (verbal translation of the word Pakistan).

Since then the minorities have had enough; injustice upon injustice has been thrust upon them. In 1958, martial law was first enforced in this country, and under it representation of minorities in the Assemblies was abolished.

Thirty-eight years ago, Islamiyat (study of Islam) was introduced as a compulsory subject for public examination. The Christian institutions agreed to teach Islamiyat and were hoping that the minorities would be free to teach their religion for public examination, but we were hoping against hope. Each time a syllabus was designed it was rejected on some pretext. Today, after years and years of struggle, Christianity still is not a subject for Christian minorities, and other

minorities do not have their religion as a subject for public examination. This matter was taken to the Supreme Court, but to no avail.

Zulfiqar-Ali-Bhutto came into power in 1972. He was considered a man of great intellect and enlightened views. Christians supported him in hopes that he would be fair and just. The 1973 Constitution adopted during Z.A. Bhutto’s regime for the first time prohibited segregation on the basis of gender or religion. Unfortunately, like all other weak-kneed governments, his government could not resist the Mullahs for long either.

In an effort to please the critics in the religious establishment, he embarked on a campaign to legitimize his policies through appeals to the Moslems. The first victims of Bhutto’s Islamization efforts were Ahmadis. In 1974, Bhutto caved into the demands of the mullahs and declared Ahmadis to be non-Moslems. With this amendment discrimination against Ahmadis received state sanction.

The next step was the nationalization of educational institutions. Christian educational institutions were nationalized. This crippled Christians completely and they have never recovered from the blow. (In Rawalpindi, when Christians peacefully protested against nationalization of their institutions, the local police opened fire on them. Four innocent protesters died on the spot). Schools and colleges that were serving people, especially schools that were serving the poor were taken over. Administrations and faculty which were 100% Christian were either dismissed or transferred. Moslem administrators and teachers replaced Christians. Education in general was ruined. In specific, poor Christian children could not attend these schools any longer. If they did so, they were ostracized from Moslem classmates, placed in a separate section of the room. They were not allowed to drink water from the same source and were forced to study Islam. This discriminatory behavior on the part of the administration and fellow students (condoned by faculty and administration) forced the Christian children to avoid educational institutions. Institutions which had previously graduated hundreds of Christian students each year have very few, if any Christian students. Consequently, a whole generation of Christians has been forced into illiteracy.

The Churches have asked for their property and institutions back, again and again, but to date not one college has been returned. In fact, one of the most elite colleges, Formen Christian College in Lahore has now been changed into the headquarters of a militant Islamic group. Just recently the Christian staff that was living on college grounds at Formen was beaten up by the Moslems and forced to give up their jobs and vacate their homes forever. This Christian property alone is worth billions of US dollars.

Christians, since the times of undivided India were considered pioneers in the fields of education and medicine. The nursing profession had a bounty of Christian men and women. Now a quota has been fixed by the government for the minorities entering this profession. Only two percent of Christians are admitted to be educated in this profession each year.

In 1977 General Zia Ul-Haq imposed Martial Law (military government). Bhutto was deposed and the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) was overthrown.

The General fueled sectarian clashes to divide the country so that no political party would unite to form a strong opposition. Disguising his desire to crush opposition, to legitimize his policies and to consolidate his hold on power he started the process of "Islamization".

In May 1978, Sharia (Islamic Laws) benches comprising of three judges were introduced in each provincial High Court. The purpose of these courts was to review all existing laws to assure that none were repugnant to the Sharia (traditional Islamic laws).

In May 1980, the separate Sharia benches were reorganized and centralized under the Federal Sharia Court, with responsibility for ensuring that all legislative acts and judicial pronouncements are compatible with Islamic law.

As a parallel judicial system, this institutional arrangement has made the legislature impotent. Sharia Courts have had the effect of weakening the jurisdiction of the Superior Court. It also acts as a super-legislature as it can order immediate revision of national laws; its rulings are binding on high and lower courts. What is most ironic is that the members of these courts are appointed by the executive and can be removed at will. They are not professional judges at all instead they are Ulema (Islamic teachers) who occupy three out of eight seats and as only five seats need to be filled to render a judgement, they easily outnumber qualified judges. What is even more alarming, Minority lawyers are banned from these courts, directly violating Articles Eighteen and Twenty in the Constitution.

To further complicate an already strained situation, the court adopted the Law of Evidence in 1984, under which the evidence of one male Moslem is worth the testimony of two Moslem women or two non-Moslem men.

Another thorn in the sight of the minorities is the Hudood Ordinance passed during the same period. According to this law, a woman complaining of rape is required to provide four Moslem male witnesses to prove her innocence, otherwise, she is convicted of adultery. The Islamic punishment for this is stoning. These laws, combined, opened Pandora's Box.

These laws have opened the door for sexual harassment of Christian women and girls. Christian females are abducted by Moslem men, raped, kept in private jails and when brought to court, the courts consider them converted to Islam on the evidence of some remote mullah. These incidents, in their entirety, are condoned; because according to another Islamic decision of the court, if a non-Moslem becomes a Moslem, his or her previous marriage is automatically voided. The forcefully converted girl is not allowed to return to her parents, as she is now considered a Moslem and must not live with non-Moslems. In the case of a married woman, she is not allowed to live with her husband, as her marriage is considered annulled. This has led to hundreds, perhaps thousands of Christian girls and women being abducted and sexually harassed. Christian families are torn apart, mothers are childless, children are forcibly made motherless and daughters snatched away from their parents. Today, no Christian woman or girl considers herself safe. Christian parents lose sleep when a daughter is born¹.

Adding to the misery of the minorities came another blow, Martial Law Ordinance Number Fourteen, under which a separate electorate was thrust upon them. The minorities were not consulted, they had no say in it. Very subtly, they were marginalized and deprived of their Pakistani nationality.

¹ See EXHIBIT A

Without considering their actual size and number, a few seats were arbitrarily fixed for the minorities, in the National and Provincial assemblies. To make matters worse, a minority candidate for the National assembly must contest from the entire country, while a Provincial minority candidate has to contest from the whole province. As a matter of fact there are no constituencies. It is not possible for the candidate to reach his voters throughout the country or even the province. The minority voters know nothing about the candidate. There is a huge void between the minority voters and minority candidates. Hence, there is no real representation. In the assemblies, as these representatives represent only the minorities the elected representatives of the majority stay aloof from them. Hence, the minority representatives receive no support or backing. They are nothing more than some dummies who have no say in the legislative process. Being completely ineffective, they cannot even raise a voice against the discriminatory laws, and even if they try to, who hears them any way?

In 1988 Bishop John Joseph challenged this matter in the Supreme Court. This case was heard by a full bench in the Supreme Court, but to this date there has been no decision. We all know that justice delayed is justice denied.

How the minority elections are held and how they are announced is proof of their second rate citizenship. After the results of the majority elections are announced, special bulletins come to an end. The minorities are still waiting for their results, and no one knows when they will be announced. There is a lot of manipulation in the results of minority elections.

Minorities have absolutely no representation in the senate, hence there is no check and no one opposes the laws that discriminate against minorities. Legislature without representation is tyranny, but who cares what the minorities think and feel.

October 13, 1992 will be remembered as a black day in the history of Pakistan². On this day, the government bowed down to the pressure of Islamic religious groups and announced the inclusion of a section specifically stating the religion of the cardholder on national identification cards.

Sensing what a great threat and danger this could pose for them, the minorities united. In fact, the minorities united, they were not alone in this heroic struggle and were accompanied by the liberal and enlightened Moslems and NGO's³. The minorities won the day after a constant and rigorous struggle, including demonstrations, hunger strikes, arrests, imprisonment, etc. But, in spite of all this, a religious column was quietly added to the Pakistani passport.

Not surprising, a minister in one of the earlier governments once suggested a dress code for the minorities. Also suggested was imposing a tax on the minorities for being protected by the government.

² See EXHIBIT B and EXHIBIT C

³ See EXHIBIT D and EXHIBIT E

After discussing the chronological and systematic persecution of the Pakistani minorities, let us now come to the actual bone of contention, presently most invoked and neck-throttling Blasphemy Laws.

Until 1980 the penal code enforced in Pakistan was in its original form of 1860. It was the British government that established these laws when the subcontinent was a British colony. Penal Code section 295 provided punishment for those who destroyed, damaged or defiled any place of worship or emblem of faith, with the intention to insult the religion of any class of persons or the knowledge that any class of persons is likely to consider such destruction as an insult. Two years imprisonment was the maximum punishment for some one accused of such an offence.

SECTION 295:

Injuring or defiling place of worship, with intent to insult the religion of any class: whoever destroys, damages or defiles any house of worship, or any object held sacred by any class of persons with the intention of thereby insulting the religion of any class of persons or with the knowledge that any class of persons is likely to consider such destruction, damage or defilement as an insult to their religion, shall be punished with imprisonment of either description for a term which may extend to two years, or with fine, or with both.

In 1927 amendments were made to this formulation and Section 295-A was added. According to this, punishment could be doled out to those who had the "deliberate and malicious intention of outraging" the religious sentiments of any class of citizens, by words written or spoken, or by visible signs. The importance of the requirement that "deliberate and malicious intention" of the accused must be proved was greatly emphasized upon, in order to avoid chilling valuable speech. Since without such an intent requirement a simple statement of any alternative religious belief could become punishable, if it had the residual effect of "outraging" an overly sensitive and too easily offended person.

These laws were designed to curb religious violence, as religious and sectarian issues were commonly used at that time to manipulate political gain. The main purpose of these laws was to protect the religious feelings of all citizens with no preference given to any religion sect or group and to develop understanding and harmony among all citizens equally.

In the present situation it is most unfortunate that these laws made to establish religious tolerance have been amended in ways which seriously undermine that tolerance. Pakistani governments, in their zeal to Islamize their laws, have turned a blind eye to the basic rights of their citizens. Their passion to Islamize the entire Pakistani society has led to serious abuses against the Religious minorities.

Under the dictatorship of Mohammed Zia-Ul-Haq, amendments were added to the Pakistan Penal Code. Section 298-A was added in 1980.

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SECTION 298-A

Use of derogatory remarks, etc., in respect of holy personages. Whoever by words, either spoken or written, or by visible representation, or by any imputation, innuendo or insinuation, directly or indirectly, defiles the sacred name of any wife (Ummul Mumineen), or members of the family (Ahle-Bait), of the Holy Prophet, or any of righteous Caliphs (Khulafa-e-Rashideen) or companions (Sahaaba) of the Holy Prophet shall be punished with imprisonment of either description for a term which may extend to three years, or with fine, or with both.

The emphasis has shifted. This clause now emphasizes protections against insults of Islamic deities. This section has completely removed the necessity of "deliberate and malicious intent," easily allowing for prosecution of "imputation, innuendo or insinuation, directly or indirectly."

In 1982, another amendment was made and Section 295-B was added to the Pakistan Penal Code. It reads as follows:

SECTION 295-B

Defiling, etc, of copy of Holy Koran: whoever willfully defiles, damages or desecrates a copy of the Holy Koran or of an extract therefrom or uses it in any derogatory manner or for any unlawful purpose shall be punishable with imprisonment for life.

This amendment provided the most serious punishment of blasphemy up till that time, being life imprisonment.

During the same year, two other amendments, Sections 298-B and 298-C, were brought about concerning the Quadiani group, or Ahmadis. They were not permitted to call themselves Moslems, or to use any title used by the prophet Mohammed and his adherents nor were they allowed to call their place of worship masjid (a mosque) any more. In all these instances the accused could be imprisoned for three years and liable to a fine as well.

In 1986, the most serious, controversial and presently invoked amendment was made. Section 295-C was added. It reads:

SECTION 295-C

Use of derogatory remark etc., in respect of the Holy Prophet: whoever by words, either spoken or written or by visible representation, or by any imputation, innuendo, or insinuation, directly or indirectly, defiles the sacred name of the Holy Prophet Mohammed shall be punished with death.

In each of these amendments, 298 A, 295-B and 295-C, the necessity to establish the deliberate and malicious intention of the accused is totally avoided. The measure of guilt depends entirely upon the subjective perception and sentiment of the hearer. The intention and knowledge of the accused is not taken into account easily allowing for prosecution of imputation, innuendo, or insinuation, directly or indirectly. Whether or not the words or deeds in question are actually derogatory depends solely on the reaction and sentiment of the listener. Judgement is based upon the testimony and sentiment of the complainant, whose evidence, he being a Moslem, has twice as much weight and credibility as a non-Moslem.

The terms "derogatory remark" or "defile the sacred name" are very vague and broad based. Blame can easily be placed, and is used as a tool against Pakistan's Religious minorities. The accused is snared in the web of the Pakistani Islamic judicial system.

These amendments are concerned only with insults to the Islamic faith and deity, and do away with the protection of all other religions' practices and beliefs. The punishments are of an extreme nature and very non-proportioned.

Prior to 1980 there were almost no allegations of blasphemy. The creation of these amendments, very little requirement of proof, total dependence on the subjective sentiment of the hearer, and entirely focusing on protecting Islam from insult, have provided fanatic Moslems with a medium to vent out their social, economical, political, religious or personal grudges⁴. This has almost eliminated religious tolerance.

Blasphemy cases are tried in an atmosphere of extreme aggression and intimidation, created by the local religious groups. Members of these groups throng the courts (in and outside), chanting religious slogans, stirring up public sentiment, freely exhibiting guns, oozies, knives, etc. and demanding death for the accused. In this volatile atmosphere, it is impossible for the judges to remain impartial.

No lawyer is willing to defend the accused. The judges react emotionally to these cases and their brazen disregard of established evidentiary standards in handing down convictions and sentences reveal a strong religious bias. What is worse, it is legally required that the judge of a blasphemy case must be Moslem. It is evident that the accused never has a fair trial.

⁴ See EXHIBIT G, EXHIBIT G-1 and EXHIBIT G-2
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Judge Talib Hussain, during the trial of a blasphemy case of Gul Masih (Masih means Christian, it is not a last name), after declaring two out of three eye witnesses hostile, based his verdict of death sentence on the sole testimony of the complainant. In his opinion for the case, Judge Talib Hussain stated:

“Sajjad Hussain, P.W. (Prosecution Witness), is a young man of 21 years age, student of four years, with a beard and outlook of being a true Moslem and I have no reason to disbelieve him.”

The wearing of a beard is an indication of a devout Moslem.

Once some one is accused of blasphemy, even if the higher courts acquit him, the accused has no safety in Pakistan, as the public, considering it a religious obligation, takes it upon themselves to kill him with their own hands.

Anyone who kills any alleged blasphemer is treated like a hero⁵. The police are very reluctant to register a case against the killer. In fact, they treat him with respect, kissing his hands and praising him for being a devout follower of Islam. Religious parties and influential people see to it that he is not punished. If arrested, he is easily released. Lawyers offer their services free of cost to defend him. The entire case is quickly concluded. On the other hand, one man accused of blasphemy was poisoned in prison and killed⁶. Another was beaten up so badly by the police that almost all of his bones were broken. He died in police custody⁷. Yet another was stabbed in the police station in front of the police, and the list goes on and on. No one, no one, to date has been convicted or sentenced for killing a blasphemer.

No government to date has taken any measure to stop the injustices born of the abuse of Blasphemy Laws, the tyranny these laws are inflicting on individuals and the divisions and bitterness they are creating in the society. The government not only condones these instances, rather, directly or indirectly supports them.

The treatment of Religious minorities has deteriorated with the systematic use of these blasphemy laws, which are freely used by fanatic Moslem individuals and organizations. Murder has been all but made legal by simply claiming that the victim had spoken against the prophet Mohammed. The steep increase in religious fanaticism and the unchecked growth of religious terrorism is creating an organized criminal syndicate. Unfortunately the Pakistani government endorses these actions.

⁵ See EXHIBIT I

⁶ See EXHIBIT F

⁷ See EXHIBIT H

Lately, a representative of the ruling party (Moslem League) and son of late Zia-Ul-Haq, Mr. Ejaz-Ul-Haq, representing the government at a conference along with thirty other religious Moslems groups in Pakistan⁸, declared:

"Even if Bill Clinton and the entire world tries to press us we will not repeal or amend the Blasphemy Laws."

They further declared that Moslems within and outside Pakistan would punish blasphemers with their own hands if the courts acquit them.

Another minister of the same ruling party said about the situation developed after the sacrifice of Bishop Dr. John Joseph, that it is "a conspiracy of the Christians and Jews against Pakistan".

Many participants of a procession, mourning the death of Bishop John Joseph, have been arrested under blasphemy laws, as a billboard on the road-side, allegedly with a Koranic verse, fell down during the procession.

In the past month alone, 600 Christians participants of a peaceful procession, were arrested by the religiously biased police for vague, concocted reasons.

Recently, in Karachi, two policemen opened fire on a group of Christians standing outside a church. Four Christians, including a child, died at the scene. No case against the police officials was registered⁹.

In February of 1997, amongst others, a village of 2000 Christian families was burnt to ashes by a mob of 40,000 Moslems, assisted by the local police¹⁰. The world did not even hear about it.

In May of 1998, while Christians in Faisalabad were attending the last rites of their beloved Bishop, Moslems burned down an adjacent Christian neighborhood¹¹. The police came after two hours, and instead of dispersing the assailants, it started tear-gassing and firing on the Christian residents. What a help they were!

⁸ See EXHIBIT J

⁹ See EXHIBIT K

¹⁰ See EXHIBIT L, EXHIBIT L-1, EXHIBIT L-2 and EXHIBIT L-3

¹¹ See EXHIBIT M

During such barbaric mob attacks, Christian women are dragged naked through the streets, women and girls gang raped, children and men brutally beaten, left with broken bones and other severe injuries. Houses are looted. Properties, vehicles and other material possessions completely ruined, burned and destroyed¹². Who is arrested, tried or sentenced? NO ONE! No one, because they are not Christians, they are not a minority. The list goes on and on as there are too many atrocities to mention here.

All this in the name of Islamization!

When states build walls between people, they create prisons in which the human spirit is crushed.

Let the government bring about Islamization, in a way where there is no corruption, no bribery, complete honesty, where in the name of religion, the poor and powerless minorities will not be discriminated against, marginalized, oppressed and persecuted. The minorities would surely not object to that.

"The Blasphemy Episode," a report by the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan concluded that:

"[Religious intolerance] finds acquiescence of Islam. Intolerance is becoming holy, a distinguishing badge of devotion to Islam. Crimes are committed without fear of official retribution or social disapproval and in the knowledge that any voices of isolated protest will not in the given atmosphere get far."

The Christians and other minorities are determined to save Pakistan and democracy. The authoritarianism, fundamentalism, sectarianism and theocracy shall no longer be tolerated. The door of the U.N. is opened, it is possible this door could be knocked on very soon.

America, you are the flag bearer of peace and human rights. You have been entrusted with this responsibility by God. Do not hesitate to help the helpless and oppressed.

The sacrifice of Bishop John Joseph, and others who have died for this cause is a beacon for us, a death of grace and glory is worth a life time, more than that of a poor, powerless and helpless Minority.

¹² See EXHIBIT N and other related material

PAKISTAN THREE CHRISTIAN GIRLS FORCIBLY CONVERTED TO ISLAM

LAHORE, Pakistan (UCAN) – A district court in Pakistan has ruled against a Christian couple who sued to regain custody of three minor daughters taken forcibly from the couple after allegedly having embraced Islam.

The Ilaqa (district) magistrate ruled on March 19 that the girls could not be returned to non-Muslim parents' custody and should remain for the while at the Dar-ul-Aman shelter for women where district officials had sent them. The magistrate also ordered that an Islamic religion teacher attend to them.

Nadia, Naima and Nabila, aged 15, 13 and 11 respectively, had been taken from their parents' home in Kashmir colony, Rawalpindi, by their Muslim landlady, Rosina, wife of Ilaqat Butt, aided by police and others on Jan. 25.

Their mother, Seema, had been injured attempting to keep them from the abductors, who claimed that it was their religious right and responsibility as Muslims to protect the new converts to Islam.

The girls, who did not attend school, had been refusing to accompany their mother to do domestic work for three months, during which time they reportedly became close with Rosina and took up Islamic practices.

Their father, Khushi Masih, found out about the incident that evening when he returned from his job as a bus driver, and with the aid of a Christian social worker registered a case of abduction.

The local police filed for a ruling for the "Muslim" girls to be adopted by interested Muslims, and on Jan. 27 a local court remanded the girls to the custody of Dar-ul-Aman until the district court ruled in the case.

The girls' parents were not allowed access to them at the shelter, while Rosina, a local mosque leader and members of an Islamic political party were.

"I was astonished to see my daughters in new cloths and wearing wrist watches," Khushi Masih told UCA News. "I got furious when Butt and Rosina and other Muslims stopped me from speaking to my daughters."

They told him that as the girls were now Muslims and he a stranger to them, he could not speak to them, because Islam disapproves of girls talking to male strangers, Khushi said. (Masih, not a surname, identifies him as a Christian.)

Meanwhile, local Muslim religious leaders announced judgments that the girls, having embraced Islam, could not return to their Christian faith.

The Lahore-based Centre for Legal Aid And Settlement (CLAAS) took up the legal defense for Khushi and Seema and even appealed to Pakistan's interior minister to intervene in the matter, but without success.

In February, after a second hearing in the case had produced no settlement, a delegation of priests from Islamabad-Rawalpindi diocese and delegates of the diocesan justice and peace committee had gone to see the district commissioner after meeting with Khushi and his minister, Pentecostal Pastor George Clement.

They received, however, only a vague assurance that the government would protect minorities and their religious freedom.

Local Christians say that they are shocked by the conversion and abduction of the girls, and that it increases their sense of insecurity as a religious minority whose most basic rights are unprotected in Islamic Pakistan.

CLAAS and local Church leaders held a press conference on March 17 to denounce the

NI cards to include religion column: NA told

ISLAMABAD, May 31: The Federal government is considering recommendations forwarded by all the four provinces for adding a column of religion in the National Identity Card.

This was stated by the Federal Interior Minister Chaudhry Shujaat Hussain while responding to views expressed by Opposition members in cut motions on the demand for grants in respect of Ministry of Interior in the National Assembly on Sunday.

He said the government had sought suggestions from all the provinces about the column of religion which was currently under consideration of the government.

The minister announced formulation of a special security plan for Islamabad, which will soon be implemented for effective control of the crime in the federal capital. He said though the cases of car lifting have dropped as compared to the last year, however, efforts were underway to make the capital a crime free city.

Regarding Sindh, he said the situation necessitated invoking of Article 147 of the Constitution,

which was also suggested by Syed Iftikhar Gillani as the law minister of the PPP government.

The minister assured the parliamentarians that nobody would be allowed to harass them. They are welcome to move privilege motions or bring into his notice in case there was some specific problem, he observed.

He admitted that illegal immigrants were present, who will be checked through the computerised system of National Identity Card, which has been introduced in Islamabad-Rawalpindi. This will later be implemented all over the country to check fake identity cards and issuance of passports to those who are not entitled.

The Interior Minister refuted the charge that law enforcement agencies were being used for victimisation of political opponents. He asked the PDA to point out those party men arrested or killed and those linked with AZO.

Earlier, Liaqut Baloch, Mian Usman, Nazir Ahmed, Syed Iftikhar Gillani, Ahmed Hasan, Syed Zafar Ali Shah, Navid Qamar, Aftab Shahban Mirani, Babu Ghulam Hussain, Mohammad Afzal

Khan, Rafiq Mahesar, Sardar Farooq Leghari, Abdul Sattar Bachani, Makhdoom Shahabuddin, Jam Saifullah and Aitzaz Ahsan spoke on various cut motions criticising the performance of the Interior Ministry and its related agencies.

They said despite enforcement of Article 147 in Sindh as many as 45 people in Sehwan have been kidnapped. They also pointed out that a religious leader in Lahore has been murdered.

Liaqut Baloch said the government should honour its commitments about the G-6 residential quarters.

Syed Iftikhar Gillani said direct transport was now available to the cities of Afghanistan. He asked for properly regulating this activity. He said that the police verification has been introduced to cover up the incompetence of the bureaucracy.

The police and paramilitary forces could yield the required results, if they were not used for political purposes, Gilani added.

Afzal Khan said the police, Coast Guards, FIA and Rangers were being used to harass political opponents.—APP

ID cards to have religion column

F.P. Bureau Report

ISLAMABAD, Oct. 13: The government has decided to add a column of religion in the national identity cards throughout the country.

A decision to this effect was made in a joint meeting of the renowned ulama and senior government officers held here on Tuesday under the chairmanship of Federal Minister of Religious Affairs Maulana Abdus Satar Khan Niazi, says a press note issued here.

Every identity card will now contain entry of religion of the applicant and all cards issued earlier will be replaced by the new ones. The government has already embarked upon a plan to issue computerised identity cards.

The decision has been taken in the light of recommendations of the provincial governments, ministry of religious affairs and the Council of Islamic Ideology.

Frontier Post
October 14, 92.

cards to have religion column

F.P. Bureau Report

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Frontier Post
October 15, 92.

Protest by Christians unjustified

FAISALABAD: There is no justification for protest by Christian community over addition of a religion column in the National Identity Card.

This was stated by Mian Tufail Ahmed Zia, a veteran Jamaat-e-Islami leader, in a press statement here. He said that entry of religion neither negated the National status of Christian nor deprived them of their legitimate national rights.

He said it seemed that the decision to launch a protest over the issue was probably imported by "Qadianis" who want to conceal their religious identity being non-Muslim.

He said the Qadianis have no courage to launch such protest themselves alleging they had instigated Christians over the issue which do not aim at harming them. The Christian community felt proud of being Christians but only Qadianis hid their true identity, he said.—APP

Pakistan Times
October 24, 92.

EXHIBIT C

7, 11, 1992. -

-9-

● Bill to ban sectarian parties

Govt. firm on religion column

● Constitution being consulted to make new inclusion in National Identity Cards into law ● Ulema for talks with minorities

By Our Reporter

LAHORE, Nov. 6: Ruling out the possibility of withdrawing the decision about religious column in the identity card, the Federal Interior Minister Ch. Shujaat Hussain disclosed on Friday that the government was consulting the constitution to make it a law.

Informally talking to newsmen at Jinnah Hall, Lahore, after attending the death anniversary of Agha Shorish Kashmiri, the federal minister further said that a law for putting a ban on sectarian parties would soon be presented in the federal cabinet for approval.

The minister avoided a number of questions of newsmen regarding a recent statement of President Ghulam Ishaq Khan in which he had expressed discontent over Nawaz government's working. However, he dispelled the impression that any change in the government was likely and said "forget about elections until 1995."

Referring to the ID cards, Ch. Shujaat said the decision of the government was final and the only task before the government was to consult the constitution in this respect. He maintained that the processions or strikes could not force the government to change its decision.

He said that any further step about the ID cards would be taken only in the light of the consultation regarding the status of a Muslim and a non-Muslim.

He said the government was also considering proposals from some of different sects whether only two columns - Muslim and non-Muslim - be included or more columns - Muslim, Christian, Jew, etc - were needed.

He further informed newsmen that the government was going to undertake a pilot project to introduce a new computerized identity card system in the country. He confirmed a report that the government was considering imposing fee for getting the ID card and

said the world over fees were charged on ID cards.

To a query the minister said the government had planned to replace the old ID cards within five years. However, he dispelled the impression that the government would announce any date, line for replacement of old ID cards and insisted that the project would be completed within five years.

He maintained that the work on the project had already begun under very good computers had been installed in the federal capital for this purpose. Following this all the provincial capitals would be provided the same computerized system.

He maintained that the computerized system would also help the government put an end to the business of fake ID cards.

He maintained that in order to build a national consensus on the issue, the government was continuously holding meetings with the minorities and ulemas of different sects.

Ch. Shujaat informed the newsmen that a number of ulemas had contacted the government to arrange their meeting with the minorities so that they could convince them of the need aspects of the religious column in ID card.

Asked to comment on banning the sectarian parties, the interior minister said the law ministry and the ministry for religious affairs had been working on it and soon a bill would be presented before the federal cabinet in this regard. It would later be moved in the National Assembly and the Senate for approval.

Frontier Post

November 7, 92.

Govt not to revise ID card policy—Shujaat

BY A STAFF REPORTER

LAHORE, Nov. 6: Interior Minister Chaudhry Shujaat Hussain has said that the Government would not revise its policy regarding the inclusion of a separate religion column for minorities in the national identity cards.

He was talking to reporters here at Jinnah Hall today where he had come to attend a Shorish Kashmiri memorial function. He said that there was no chance of the withdrawal of the decision and the government was firm on its stand.

He revealed that some religious parties were contacting the government for getting arranged meetings with the minorities so that all the misgivings regarding the inclusion of the separate religion column could be removed.

The Government wanted to reach an agreement with Ulema of various schools of thought on this particular issue. As Islam had given equal rights to minorities,

the same would also be given to them in this country, too.

Replying to a question, the Interior Minister said that a pilot project regarding the replacement of the already issued national identity cards with the new ones, had already been launched in Islamabad.

Identical projects would also be introduced in other parts of the country very soon. This process would be completed within a period of five years.

When asked about the computerisation of the ID cards preparing system he said that the programme had already been taken up as it would eliminate chances of the issuance of counterfeit cards.

APP adds:

The Federal Interior Minister, Chaudhry Shujaat Hussain today categorically denied BCC's report that government was revised its decision regarding inclusion of separate column about minorities in national identity cards and reiterated that government was

Religion column decision not revised: Shujaat

By Our Staff Reporter

LAHORE - Federal Interior Minister, Ch. Shujaat Hussain has said there was no danger for the government and it would, not only complete its tenure but the PM, would also win the next elections in 1995.

He was talking to newsmen on the occasion of 17th death anniversary of Shorish Kashmiri at Jinnah Hall. "Which UI" was his reply when he was asked whether the government would contest next elections from the UI platform? He said it would be decided on the occasion of next elections. To another question he said the government had taken an Islamic decision about the inclusion of religion column in ID Card. He denied that the government had decided to withdraw the decision.

He said the government was also considering to fix fee for ID Card. "The Department of ID Cards is being computerised and all the ID Cards

Nation
November 7, 92.

adhered to its stand.

While talking to the newsmen after attending death anniversary of Abdul Karim, Shorish Kashmiri at local Jinnah Hall this afternoon the Interior Minister said that there was no truth in BCC's report and added that necessary legislation would be made in this connection.

Pakistan Times November 7, 1992.



EXHIBIT
D

LAHORE: Ms Asma Jehangir, a human rights activist, addressing a meeting held at a hotel here on Monday to protest against the decision to add religion's column in the National Identity Cards.—Dawn photo



EXHIBIT
E

LAHORE: Bare-footed, minority councillor, Tariq Gill who blackened his face to protest against religion column leading a procession of Christians and others at Shahrah-I-Quaid-I-Azam here on Wednesday.

Tahir Iqbal

EXHIBIT F

The second death inspired by Pakistan's blasphemy laws took place in prison, again before the judicial system had a chance to work. Tahir Iqbal, an unmarried, retired 33 year old Christian, paralysed from the waist down, died in Kot Lakhpat prison in Lahore under mysterious circumstances. He was being held in judicial lock-up prior to trial for blasphemy.

Tahir Iqbal had lived alone in Nishat colony in Canatt after retiring from his position as a technician in the air force in 1982. Six years after his retirement, in 1988, Tahir Iqbal, who was born a Muslim, converted to Christianity. His neighbors, and even members of his family, including his step-mother, seem to have been angered by the presence of a Christian in their midst.

One neighbor reported that young Muslim men visited Tahir to ask why he had converted. They then went to the Khateeb of the local mosque, Maulvi Pirzada Ali Ahmed Sabir Chishti, to provide rebuttals to Tahir's statements. Some local Christians claimed that the maulvi's inability to answer these questions led him to file an FIR against Tahir December 7, 1990. (Maulvi Pirzada was subsequently removed from his own mosque in 1992 by the local people for fraud in the collection of money for the Haj, which he allegedly spent in Karachi.)

Maulvi Pirzada charged Tahir Iqbal with making a zaicha, marking a copy of the Qur'an, and speaking against the Holy Prophet. Pakistan Penal Code sections 295-B and -C were invoked; Tahir was arrested on January 1, 1991.

No lawyer took Tahir's case for many months until a group of lawyers, including Naeem Shakir and Asma Jahangir (of the HRCP) did take the case. They report having been threatened with severe consequences by colleagues of Maulvi Pirzada. These colleagues also appeared at many of Tahir's court hearings in order to intimidate the judge. Tahir's step mother also appeared at hearings, where she loudly condemned her step son for his conversion, declaring that his disability was God's punishment.

Claiming that "conversion from Islam to Christianity is in itself a cognizable offense involving serious implications," the Additional Sessions Judge denied Tahir bail; the judge exposed his motive for keeping Tahir in custody by admitting in court that Tahir would probably be killed if he were released on bail. The High Court upheld this order, despite the fact that conversion is not an offense under Pakistani law at all.

The complainant, Maulvi Pirzada, and others, filed a request on April 23, 1992, for Tahir Iqbal to be sentenced to death for this non-offense of conversion. The Judge hearing this request, Sabah Mohyuddin, rejected it categorically, saying that the accused would only be sentenced to death if the prosecution could prove that he were a blasphemer. The case was transferred, following this hearing, away from Judge Saban Mohyuddin; meanwhile, the power of attorney for all of Tahir's lawyers disappeared from his file.

In all, Tahir remained in remand at the prison for more than 19 months. On April 19, water and electricity to his room were cut off, such that he had no toilet or other facilities. Joseph Francis of the Pakistan Christian National Party, sent telegrams to the IG Prisons and the Superintendent at Kot Lakhpat until these basic services were restored a month later. The head warden, Manzoor Wasli, was the architect of this mistreatment, according to the deputy superintendent of the prison; Tahir Iqbal was thus transferred to another part of the prison.

[Left out of Presidential Election \(Asawal Sardar: December 28, 1997\)](#)

[Archbishop Carey Speaks Out \(Asawal Sardar: December 9, 1997\)](#)

[Protest on Human Rights Day \(Asawal Sardar: December 10, 1997\)](#)

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Death Sentence Passed on a Christian Accused of Blasphemy

(On May 12 a division bench of the Lahore High Court suspended temporarily the death sentence given to Ayub Masih.)

Pakistan (May 5, 1998)

Ayub Masih (27), a Christian accused of having said derogatory words about the Prophet Mohammad during a dispute with a fellow villager, was sentenced to death under the Blasphemy Laws in Pakistan. Rana Abdul Ghaffar, the Additional Sessions Judge, Sahiwal, announced the judgment on April 27, 1998. Journalists were not allowed to be present for the court hearing, which was held in jail for the defendant's safety. On November 6, 1997, Ayub Masih had been shot at in the corridors of the Sessions Court in Sahiwal on November 6, 1997. The same judge had requested the Lahore High Court to allow a jail trial for lack of security in the open court.

Ayub Masih can appeal within 30 days in the High Court against the judgment. He had pleaded not guilty and his lawyer claimed that the prosecution had relied only on the verbal testimony of the complainants and no circumstantial evidence had been provided to prove the allegation against the accused.

Background

A case under Section 295 C of the Pakistan Penal Code, which carries a mandatory death

On July 1, 1992, Tahir Iqbal gave several letters to a fellow prisoner, who was being released, to deliver to the Prime Minister, the chief secretary and the home secretary. These letters expressed Tahir's fear that Manzoor Wasli, Maulvi Pirzada, and his step mother were plotting to kill Tahir while he remained in jail. Additionally, Tahir believed that his land would be confiscated by these and other parties conspiring against him. He therefore gave the property deeds to Joseph Francis, with instructions to secure the land for charitable purposes.

Despite these premonitions and precautions, Tahir was unable to save himself; he died in prison on July 20. Moreover, Tahir's property now belongs to a neighbor, Saleem, who claims to have

purchased it for Rs. 50,000 from a man named "Arthur," who he says had a power of attorney. Saleem told a reporter for the Pakistani Friday Times that he bought Tahir's property because he "didn't want another Christian to move next door."

In order to investigate the mysterious circumstances of Tahir Iqbal's death in jail, a post mortem was ordered by the Deputy Commissioner. Inexplicably, however, the body was given to Tahir's step mother, who supported the complaint against her step son. The Chief Justice of the Lahore High Court has granted an application to exhume the body and carry out the post mortem.

A case under Section 295-C of the Pakistan Penal Code, which carries a mandatory death punishment, was brought against Ayub Masih on October 14, 1996, in Arifwala (Southern Punjab, 700 km from the capital Islamabad). After the accusation, the Christian populace (15 families) of the village where Ayub Masih lives was forced to evacuate the village the same day, leaving all their belongings behind.

Since the evacuation of the Christian families, tension was mounted between the landless Christian peasants and the land-owning Muslims in the area.

The former had applied to the provincial government for an allotment of a piece of land for their settlement. It has been alleged in some local sources that some Muslim landowners did not want Christians to own land such that they will become their neighbours. Ayub was accused of blasphemy during a dispute with a Muslim villager. Local sources claim that the accusation of Ayub Masih was a tactic used by some Muslim groups against the Christian minority so that the latter would not be able to reclaim their land and be expelled from the village.

It is interesting to note that Ayub's brother Samsoun was also taken into custody and accused of blasphemy. The two brothers were allegedly severely tortured by their accusers and the police. Later on, the police declared Samsoun innocent and only charged Ayub with having insulted the Prophet of Islam.

The trial progressed normally till November 6, 1997, when Ayub was shot at in the court room. Luckily he was saved. One of Ayub's brothers and his mother who were present at the scene identified the assailant as Mohammad Akram, one of the complainants in Ayub's blasphemy case. Ayub's family tried to lodge a case with the police but was rejected. They then approached the Lahore High Court Multan Bench where their application is pending a hearing.

Ayub's blasphemy case has sparked public controversy. Two religio-political groups, Sipah-e-Sahaba Pakistan and Majlis Khatam-e-Nabuat Pakistan, have carried out a propaganda campaign against Ayub. Pamphlets have been distributed inciting Muslims in the district to take revenge on the Christians whom they claim are guilty of insulting the Prophet Mohammed.

Subject: Flash News: Pakistan
Date: Wed, 4 Feb 1998 14:54:35 -0500
From: "Jeff L. Taylor" <compassdr@compuserve.com>
To: Blind.Copy.Receiver@compuserve.com

FLASH NEWS from COMPASS DIRECT
 Global News from the Frontlines

PAKISTANI PASTOR MURDERED IN CHURCH LAND DISPUTE
 Muslim Cleric Accused of Stabbing Presbyterian Clergyman

KARACHI, Pakistan, February 4 (Compass)--The murder of a Presbyterian pastor last week over an apparent church land dispute with a Muslim cleric was confirmed today by newspapers throughout Pakistan's Punjab province.

The Rev. Noor Alam, 58, pastor of the United Presbyterian Church in Shaikhupura, near Lahore, was stabbed to death on the night of January 28 at his residence on Murreedkay Road in Sultanpura.

Alam's wife Sakina and daughter Shazia reportedly witnessed the murder. Today his widow and surviving daughter filed accusations of murder against a local Muslim cleric, Mullana Habib Ullah, and two other persons, at the City Division Police Station in Sultanpura.

According to the recorded statement of Alam's widow to the police, Habib Ullah had been arousing local Muslims against the construction of the Presbyterian church for some time. She stated that the partly finished church building had been ransacked and demolished by a Muslim mob on December 5.

After a preliminary investigation into the incident, the Lahore-based Center for Legal Aid and Settlement (CLAAS) reported that Alam had purchased the church land two years ago from a local Muslim landlord named Haji Yousef. The landlord himself had reportedly helped Alam pour the foundations for his church, CLAAS told Compass.

"The day the church was demolished," CLAAS coordinator Joseph Francis said, "Habib Ullah first asked his allies to bolt the outside doors of some 10 to 14 Christian homes in the area, and then they knocked down the erected walls of Alam's church under construction."

Alam's wife and daughter noted in their police statement that after the December 5 attack, the pastor sought the help of local police against Habib

Ullah, in order to reconstruct the walls and complete his church building.

The mainline Urdu and English press reports in the Punjab made no mention of theft as a probable motive for Alam's murder, as claimed by local police.

The district superintendent of police appointed Police Inspector Malik Muneer as investigative officer in the case, ordering police guards posted at the residence of the deceased pastor to protect his surviving family.

Bishop of Karachi Ejaz Inayat of the Church of Pakistan condemned the violent land dispute which resulted in Alam's murder. "This was not just a murder of a Christian pastor, but the murder of the fundamental, basic right of religious freedom," Inayat said.

In a similar vigilante attack a month earlier, another Muslim cleric had attacked a Roman Catholic church in Chapianwalla, near Faisalabad, on December 23.

Apparently upset by the church's Christmas preparations, a Muslim leader identified as Mullana Abbas reportedly pulled down the church's crucifix and Bible and confiscated its microphone system. When the area magistrate ordered police to release the accused cleric, 2,000 Christians gathered at the Catholic Cathedral in Faisalabad on January 4 to protest the government's indifference to desecration of Christian property and sensitivities.

Local press quoted Peter John Sabotra—a Christian member of the Pakistan National Assembly—as promising Pakistan's Christian minority that he would discuss with authorities in Islamabad the rising incidence of attacks against Christian churches.

Reported from Karachi by Aswaj Sardar

END

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KARACHI CHRISTIAN STILL JAILED ON BLASPHEMY CHARGES ✓

EXHIBIT G-2

By Barbara Baker, NNI Correspondent

KARACHI, Pakistan (NNI)--Nine months and 25 court hearings after his arrest for allegedly using "derogatory language" against the Prophet Mohammed, Christian shopkeeper Chand Barkat, 34, is still imprisoned in Karachi's Central Jail.

Charged under Pakistan Penal Code 295-C, which carries the death penalty if convicted, Barkat has three times been refused bail by what human rights activists describe as a "mullah-intimidated judiciary."

According to Salahuddin Khan Gnadapur, the Muslim lawyer representing Barkat in Karachi's Second Additional Sessions Court, the accusations against his client constitute "malicious prosecution."

Barkat was accused by a rival Muslim merchant in the Mangal Bazaar, where both sold women's bangles, of making insulting remarks against the Prophet Mohammed and his mother. "It was totally business rivalry," Gandapur said, noting that his client's accuser, Mohammed Arif, was a "fanatic young mullah" as well as a business competitor.

Arif reportedly mobilized the maulvis of Kashmir Colony, the district of Karachi were both lived, against Barkat when he refused to leave the bazaar and set up his business elsewhere.

As of May 31, Gandapur told NNI, all six Muslim witnesses for the prosecution had been deposed before the court. "It has been clarified that except for the (plaintiff), none of them claim to have heard Chand say anything," Gandapur said.

Now that the prosecution has finally rested its case, Barkat's attorney said he did not expect the hearings for the defense to extend for more than another six to eight weeks. "Then Chand should be acquitted," he speculated.

Barkat, who is married with six children, was in business with his younger brother John, who has not been allowed to re-open their shop in the bazaar since Chand's arrest, leaving both families destitute. The two brothers were clearing about 12,000 rupees (\$480) per month in their partnership business.

According to their elder brother Parvaiz Barkat, the family's major concern after securing Chand's acquittal is how to protect him after his release. One threat against his life during his first month in prison forced prison authorities to put him in a separate cell from other prisoners. More recently, the family learned that the mullahs had threatened to kill one of their own, a Muslim who wanted to testify on Chand's behalf.

"We are worried and fear for Chand's life," Parvaiz Barkat admitted.

However, he said that the long months of imprisonment had deepened his brother's faith as a Christian. "Chand attended the church before," Parvaiz Barkat recalled, "but now he is a stronger Christian than before. Mostly he is praying until two or three o'clock in the night in the prison." Chand was acquitted by the court on 24 January 1992.

Please contact NNI for a photo of Chand Barkat.

EXHIBIT H



Funeral picture of Daniel Masih from Narowal (Pakistan) who was butchered by Muslim extremists on March 10, 1997 - "His crime" - He was a Christian & became a target of Muslims' witch-hunt. Finally the same usual inevitable happened, i.e; a common practice of *Lynching* - He was brutally slaughtered. Family is shown in the picture - wailing.

Courtesy: Christian Voice of Pakistan

*P. O. Box 47012,
Philadelphia, Pa. 19160*

CASES**EXHIBIT I****Naimat Ahmar**

Naimat Ahmar, a 45 year old teacher and poet living in Faisalabad, was butchered on January 6, 1992, by a neighbor who believed him to be a blasphemer. Born into a poor, Christian family, Naimat overcame great odds in order to get an education and improve his station in life. He earned his B.A. and B. Ed. and started his teaching career at the Faisalabad corporation school. As a young man, he was inspired by the thought of Mao Tse Tung; friends have described him as a revolutionary who desired a classless society in Pakistan.

After teaching for more than fifteen years, he was given the position of headmaster at the Miani High School. This school had been controlled by influential local landlords and chaudhries, who did not appreciate the new headmaster's attempts to create more of a democratic atmosphere in the school and to eliminate stratification. For example, Naimat challenged the fact that some influential members of the community were using school grounds for their personal benefit (for cultivation, and for storing animals). Members of the community, including his fellow teachers, began referring to him as chura.

Attempts by Miani teachers and others to implicate Naimat in a case of indiscipline failed, since they could not prove their charges. They did manage to get Naimat transferred in early 1991, however, to the Zamindar High School in Dashua, 13 kilometers away from Faisalabad. The teachers and others in that community also did not appreciate Naimat's methods, and tried to have him transferred again.

On December 18, 1991, anonymously authored posters accusing Naimat of disgracing Islam and of speaking degradingly of the Holy Prophet were posted on the school, and on houses and shops. The next day, twenty-nine teachers signed a petition asking the headmaster to respond to the charges; an inquiry led by the teachers was unable to corroborate the accusation. Naimat denied the allegations in writing and offered a formal, unconditional apology for any insult he might have caused inadvertently.

Realizing that the inflammatory posters put him in danger, Naimat requested another transfer, and enlisted the aid of Bishop John Joseph of Faisalabad on December 21, 1991. Although the government had put a ban on transfers, the Bishop was able to secure, through the Director of Education, a post at the District Education Office (DEO) headquarters in Faisalabad, where Naimat was assigned temporarily. Following Naimat's move, the headmaster of the Dasuha school received an application for employment from Allah Ditta, an uncle of the man who later murdered Naimat.

Only weeks after the transfer, on the morning of January 6, 1992, Farooq Ahmad, a 20 year old man from Faisalabad, stopped

Naimat outside of the DEO and stabbed him. One account describes the murder as a series of 17 stabs; another relates that after an initial stab to the stomach, Farooq Ahmad straddled Naimat and slit his throat. Farooq claimed to have stopped stabbing long enough to ask his victim why he had been blasphemous and to hear Naimat Ahmar's denial. The entire DEO staff witnessed this stabbing in broad daylight, but no DEO official came forward to lodge a formal first information report (FIR) on the murder; this was done by Waqar Ahmar, Naimat's brother, who was not a witness to the crime.

Farooq Ahmad admitted to police that he never heard Naimat Ahmar say anything derogatory of Islam or the Prophet, but insisted that he was convinced of the truth of the accusation by the anonymous posters. Speaking with members of the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP) on January 22, 1992, he acknowledged that Naimat's students had never complained about their teacher and that no one had ever accused Naimat of blasphemy before the anonymous posters appeared. The headmaster and teachers of the Dasuha school confirmed this sympathetic portrait of the victim. His students firmly denied that their teacher had committed any such crime in their presence.

Farooq nonetheless maintained that his murderous action was justified. He named several teachers who he said endorsed the accusation of blasphemy, including Mushtaq, who had been a colleague of Naimat Ahmar's at the school in Miani; Arshad, a teacher at Dasuha; and Qari Ajmal Hussain, an Arabic teacher at the Dasuha Government School. Moreover, each teacher who testified to the Commission that he was convinced of Naimat's guilt (Muhammad Arshad, Qari Ajmal, Saeed Sahib, Amjad, Manzoor and Muhammad Bashir) said they were relying upon Mushtaq's claim that he had heard the blasphemy. None of them had actually heard any derogatory statements from Naimat with their own ears. According to the headmaster at Dasuha, however, Mushtaq had categorically denied having made any allegation.

Farooq has acknowledged that the motive of his act was to kill the man he believed to be a blasphemer, and that he has no regrets about his act, but in fact feels that he has done his duty as a Muslim. He claimed that he waited several days for the police to take action against Naimat after the posters were hung; since no action was taken, he took a knife from his father's butcher shop and decided to act himself. He told no one of his intention and kept solitary watch over Naimat for a full day before the murder. At 10:00 am on January 6, Farooq called Naimat out of the DEO on the pretext of delivering a message. When Naimat emerged, he was slain.

Police officers and many local clerics congratulated Farooq Ahmad on his courage and commitment to Islam during and after his arrest. The Arabic teacher Qari Ajmal and some clerics hired lawyers to defend him; the President of the Faisalabad Bar Association volunteered free legal counsel to him, without consultation with the other members of the Association, who knew

nothing of the offer. Local clerics told Farooq's family that influential people in Islamabad had given assurances that the killer would be released when public attention waned. No prominent lawyer stepped forward to argue the case of the slain man.

At the time of the HRCF mission, the investigator had only confiscated the murder weapon and taken the names of witnesses. No confession statement had been taken, and no questions asked of the accused. In addition, no attempt had been made to identify the author of the posters. The investigating officer on the case reported hesitation to pursue the investigation, for fear of the reaction of the local clerics.

The HRCF concluded that the blasphemy laws encouraged private citizens to take murderous actions like Farooq Ahmed's, saying:

Farooq knew that blasphemy was a cognizable offense punishable by death, and that a person accused of it wouldn't even easily get bail. He was also apparently emboldened by the fact that if he prejudged the sentence and carried it out himself while the issue was fresh, those approving of it would be, if not more numerous, certainly more vocal and assertive than those disapproving it. Such laws in an intolerant religious atmosphere can therefore only encourage persecution at the popular fanatical level.

protected against any threat of harassment or revenge.

In the meantime, given the many alleged abuses of these laws, it is important that your government undertake a review of the Blasphemy Laws of the Pakistan Penal Code to ensure the rule of law for the people of Pakistan.

Please remember to send copies of your letters to Hotline.

DO NOT TYPE "c.c. copy to Hotline" in your original letters.

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EXHIBIT J

Repealing of Blasphemy Laws

**Muslims & Christians formed Separate Bodies to deal with blasphemy laws
Muslim Expert says 'death' is not the punishment for blasphemy**

Asawal Sardar (May 18, 1998)

Karachi (Compass): The "all parties conference" held in Lahore on May 17, which included the ruling party, Muslim League and over 30 leading Islamic Parties, issued a statement opposing even a lenient attitude towards the demand of the country's Christian minority for the repealing of blasphemy law sections 295-C & B. The "all parties conference" also called for a countrywide strike on May 23.

The representatives of the Islam based Parties expressed their views while protecting the country's controversial blasphemy law and termed that that protection of the blasphemy law is as important as the protection of Pakistan. On this basis they endorsed their countrywide strike call and requested the entire country's Muslims to hold rallies and abstain from attending work on this day to make the strike successful. According to a press report published in an Urdu daily 'Pakistan', the conference said that Namooos-e-Rasalat (defense of the honor of Mohammed's (PBUH) prophecy } is an important and fundamental belief. The conference participants also asserted that, if the blasphemy law were repealed or amended, Muslims in Pakistan and the world would punish blasphemers by their own hands.

Mohammed Ejaz-ul-Haq, representing the ruling party (Muslim League) said during his address to the conference that even if President Bill Clinton along with the entire world press Pakistan, the law will not be amended. He told the conference that the Muslim League will support and stand with the conference in its efforts to safeguard the blasphemy law. He also claimed that Bishop John Joseph's suicide was a plot against Pakistan planned by the Indian terrorist organization 'RAW'. Finally, he assured the conference on behalf of the ruling party that the Muslim League will participate in the strike on May 23.

General (retired) Hameed Gull told the conference that Christian and Jews are teaming up against Islam but the law of blasphemy will not be amended. He stressed the need to form a Muslim delegation from Pakistan to visit the Pope in order to inform him of the true state of affairs in Pakistan.

were buried around 3:00 pm today here at Drigh Road Christian Cemetery. They were killed yesterday when a Muslim Police Constable and his two companions fired indiscriminately at Christian youth members who were just standing outside St. Peter's Church in Natha Khan Goth.

The funeral service was jointly led by Roman Catholic and Protestant Priests at the fully packed Roman Catholic St. Joseph's Church. The dead bodies of Riaz Sardar, Akbar Fazal and Skindar Warris were taken to the graveyard by Christians in a traditional way, i.e., men carried the coffins on their shoulders rather than transporting them in a funeral van. Some moderate Muslims also attended the funeral.

So far, no formal case have been registered at the Share-e-Faisal Police Station regarding the incident. About nine Christian men and women who sustained bullet injuries are under treatment at the Jinnah Hospital, Karachi.

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EXHIBIT K

Killings in Karachi (Asawal Sardar: May 14, 1998)

A Muslim Police Constable, Mohammed Liaqat and his two companions, around 10:00 PM (May 14) opened fire indiscriminately on Christian young people who were just standing outside St. Peter's Church. This resulted in the death of four men including a minor boy child (12) and a Muslim man. More than 8 men and women were also injured and taken to Jinnah Hospital, Karachi.

The Police Constable fired at the Christian youth with his state gun, probably an AK47. Skindar Warris (12), Riaz Sardar (25), Akbar Fazal (40+) and a Muslim Syed Jamil Shah (26) were killed and two ladies and more than six men received serious bullet injuries.

According to eyewitnesses, Liaqat was in his Police Uniform when opened fire. He has been serving as guard at the Mosque Jamia Farooqia.

Muslim community members who came to the hospital said the assailants were drunk and were not acting on behalf of the Muslim cause. However, they suggested the assailants may have been trying to take revenge due to the prevailing tension following the death of Bishop Joseph.

This incident has intensified concern in other Christian localities of the City. The funeral is tomorrow at the same church in Share Faisal Colony, Natha Khan Goth.

Liaqat disappeared after the attack, and none of his companions have been arrested at the time of the filing of this report.

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NEWS: On May 12 a division bench of the Lahore High Court temporarily suspended the



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NEWS ITEM

ST. JOHN MONTHLY MAGAZINE, -St. John Coptic Orthodox Church
21329 Cienega Ave.,
Covin., Ca. 91724,
Tel. 909-599-9075 OR
FAX Tel. 909-592-8847., Vol. 9. No. 86. March 1997

MUSLIMS & VIOLENCE AROUND THE WORLD CHRISTIAN
LINK SPRING 1997

A NEWSLETTER FOR CONCERNED CHRISTIANS VOLUME I
ISSUE 3

SHANTINAGAR RAZED TO GROUND

According to informed sources, Shantinagar, a Christian township, in central Pakistan was attacked by thousands of Muslims which resulted in dozens wounded, including women and children. The attack came as a result of circulation of unfounded and false information among the Muslims, that the Christians of Shantinagar committed Blasphemy against their prophet, and were guilty of desecrating the Koran!

According to details, on February 6th, 1997 at 10:00AM local time, approx. 30,000 armed Muslims from about 30 villages gathered and attacked Shantinagar. The Muslims wreaked havoc upon the Christians. It is reported that every house in the village was set on fire. The women were raped indiscriminately. According to witnesses, five Churches belonging to different denominations were desecrated, set on fire and completely destroyed in the wake of this attack. Army has been called to control this volatile situation. A curfew has been declared in Shantinagar and neighboring villages.

On January 27th, 1997 a Christian man was falsely arrested by the Police on a charge of running an illegal gambling den. The police ransacked the house and desecrated the Holy Bible. During a demonstration the Muslims destroyed two Churches. An eyewitness reports that the Christians ran out of their houses and took shelter in the nearby fields where they spent a cold night out in the open "The police watched silently as the lynch mob of Muslims went on a bloody rampage".

The Christians of this area have appealed to the world community especially the Christians in the USA to come to their rescue.

For the son of man came to seek and to save the lost: Luke 19:10

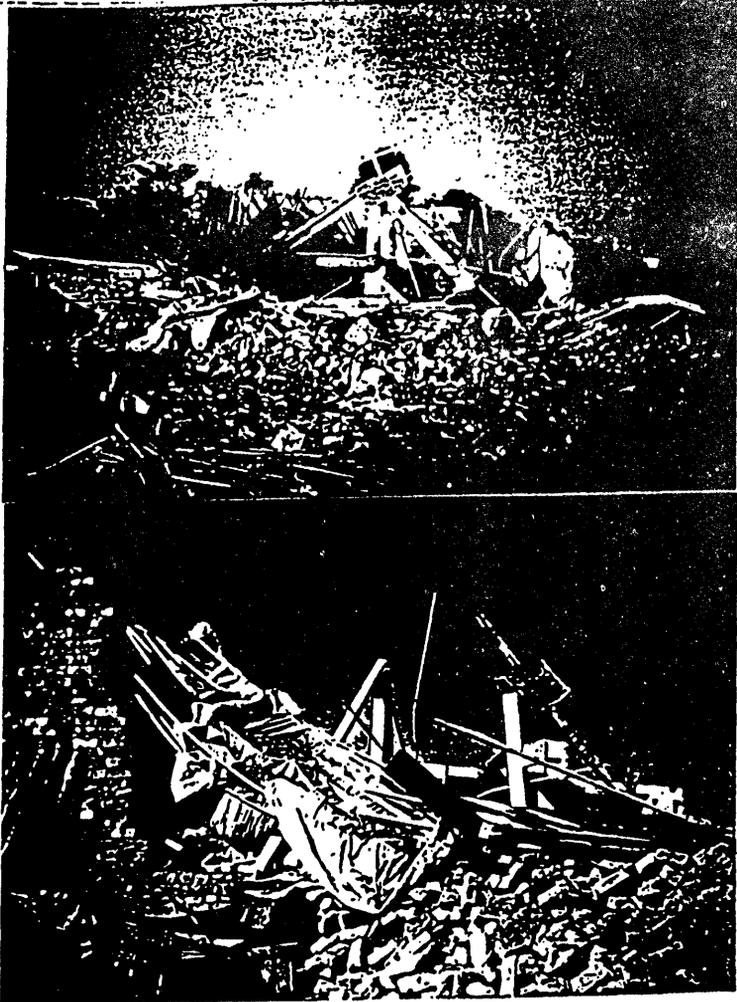
EXHIBIT L-1

F.G.A. CHURCH



Wazir Abadi Old Air-Port Walton Near L-Block, Gulberg III, LAHORE-PAKISTAN.

Witness Nazir Zahid Khokhar



WITNESSES: NAZIR ZAHID KHOKHAR

EXHIBIT L-2



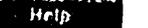
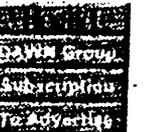
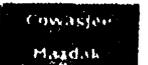
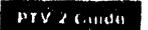
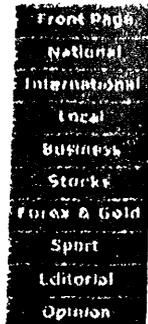
EXHIBIT L-3



"They bombed my house & Beat me up."



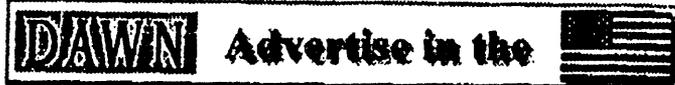
Powerful explosive bombs blew up this house bending iron beams (Shantinagar, Pakistan 2/6/97).
(Courtesy: Christian Voice of Pakistan, P.O.Box 47014, Philadelphia, Pa. 19160)



11 May 1998

Monday

14 Mubarram 1419



Christian locality attacked in Faisalabad

By Our Staff Correspondent

FAISALABAD, May 10: The police resorted to teargas shelling, firing in the air and baton-charge to overpower a mob which had attacked a Christian locality here on Sunday and arrested three persons Amir, Umar Hayat and Naseem.

A group of 500 youngsters attacked the Christian Town, one of the oldest Christian localities in the centre of the city on Narwala Road, and ransacked over a dozen houses and shops, when most of the people of the area had gone to attend the funeral of Bishop Dr John Joseph.

Eyewitnesses said the youngsters were going in a procession to attend a rally called by religious leaders at the Clock Tower intersection of the city to protest against the Christians youngsters who had reportedly disgraced the "Kalima" and "Darood Sharief" boards by pelting them with stones last Friday evening.

The mob, carrying iron rods and hockey sticks, suddenly rushed towards the Christian Town, inhabited by over 6,000 Christians, and set at least 13 shops and houses on fire. A six-year old girl, Mahwish, daughter of Bisharat, and Rahmat Masih suffered burn injuries in the attack. The mob also pelted stones on a number of houses and shops in the locality and damaged them.

The owners of those shops and houses later alleged that gold ornaments, cash and other precious articles had been looted during the attack.

Some of the Christians held the district administration and the police responsible for the situation. They said that while they were going towards the house of the bishop, they were encircled by heavy contingents of police. However, no arrangements were made to protect their localities from mob attacks.

Eyewitnesses told this correspondent the police had arrived at the scene after half an hour of the attack, and alleged that it had been preplanned as most of the attackers were carrying cans of petrol for setting their houses ablaze.

They alleged further that the police had fired teargas shells towards their houses instead of the attackers, which created panic and harassment among the children and women who were alone in the houses at that time.

The Christians also showed a burnt copy of the holy Bible to the team of newsmen who visited the

Some Recent examples of Religious Violence:**EXHIBIT N**

1. IQBAL TAHIR, was imprisoned under 295 C, and poisoned in Lahore Jail in December 1990.
2. BANTU MASIH, was accused of Blasphemy and stabbed to death in a Lahore police station.
3. CHAND BARKAT, of Karachi was booked under 295 C, but sessions Judge, acquitted him. He has gone abroad, since then.
4. NEHAMT AHMER, a school teacher, in Faisalabad, was accused of Blasphemy and stabbed to death in January 1992.
5. SARWAR MASIH, of Sind, was booked under 295 B, acquitted and since then he is leading a hidden life, in Pakistan.
6. GUL MASIH, of Sargodha, was sentenced to death under 295 C, January 1993, later acquitted by Lahore High Court. He lives abroad.
7. ANWAR MASIH, of Sammundri, booked under 295 C, February 1993. Since then he is in jail. At this moment he is with us, free at last.
8. HABIB MASIH, of Sheikhpura, was booked under 295 B. The case is still going on.
9. MANZUR, SALAMAT AND REHMAT MASIH, were booked under 295 C. They were shot at, near the High Court Building, Lahore. Manzur Masih died on the spot, Salamat & Rehmat were seriously injured. They received a death sentence (Salamat was only 12 years old, at that time), later acquitted by Lahore High Court. Since then they are abroad.
10. CATHERINE SHAHEEN, a school teacher in Multan. She was accused of Blasphemy in June 1995. Since then she has not received her pay, she is hiding because some fundamentalists have sworn to kill her. We are helping her and her parents financially.
11. CAROL SHAKEEL, a fourteen years old (girl) student of class nine, Sukhar, Sind. Accused of blasphemy, was forced to become Muslim by 225 Maulvis who had signed a document to kill her.
12. MUKHTAR MASIH, accused of blasphemy, killed by police in a Lahore police station, in November 1995.
13. Nelson Rahi, a stenographer in General Hospital, Rawalpindi, booked under 295 B, and imprisoned. He is out on bail, the case is still going on.
14. AYUB MASIH, of Arif wala, Sahiwal, booked and imprisoned under 295 C, in October 1996, shot at in the premises of Sessions Court, Sahiwal, in November 1997. He is condemned to death. We are appealing in the High Court against this decision.

A FEW EXAMPLES OF VIOLENCE BY POLICE AND TERRORISTS:

1. Sr. Susanne, O.P was shot and killed by a terrorist on 11th August 1988, in Bahawalpur.
2. Fr. Cyprian Dias, OFM was shot and killed by terrorists on 11th September 1988 in Karachi.
3. Nazir Masih, a Christian young man was tortured and killed in a Faisalabad police station in 1993

2. The main Catholic Church in Peshawar was stoned by fundamentalistic Muslims in November 1990. The Christians protested strongly all over Pakistan and the government apologized.

3. The Parish Church of Sat Chak, Faisalabad was desecrated by a Maulvi, during Good Friday service on 5th April, 1996. Later, while hearing this case, the High Court Judge asked the advocate, "How could the Maulvi remain alive, while at that moment 2500 Christians were present in the Church"? The advocate, a Muslim, answered, "It

is their doctrine of non-violence, that saved the Maulvi".

4. Shantinagar Tragedy: February 1997 will ever remain a black month for the Christians of Pakistan. Fourteen Churches and over a thousand Christian houses were destroyed. The gardens and the crops were cut down. The udders of the buffaloes and cows belonging to Christians in that area were slashed, all in the name of religion.

5. Chapianwali, Chak 182, Toba Tek Sing Church: On 23rd December 1997, a Christian young man was whitewashing the Church. It was 10:00 a.m. He had a Christmas cassette playing over the tape recorder. The Maulvi of the village, came on his motor cycle, right in the Church; beat up the Christian boy, threw down the Bible, and smashed the Crucifix and broken the legs of the figure of Jesus in three places and till today the broken body of Jesus is lying under the wooden cross, where the Maulvi has thrown it. We shall keep it there, till we get justice from the government. The highest police officer of Faisalabad Division, told us on 9th January (1998) that the police will take appropriate action. We are waiting. If the Christians are not satisfied, our next step will be well planned, fully coordinated and very strong. For that we shall need your prayerful active cooperation-from each one of you.

SHOT-GUN CONVERSION OF A MINOR:

Yesterday (13-1-98), the Parish Priest of Gojra phoned me that he had with him Dial Masih of Chak 182, Chapianwali (Where the Church was recently desecrated) And Amar Masih, his 13 years old son. The boy was working in the poultry form of Muhammad Naveed who put their holy book, Quran, on the head of the boy and said, now you

have become a Muslim. If you ever call yourself a Christian again, I shall shoot you. I have written your name on this bullet.

4. The watchman of the Maltese sisters was shot and wounded in Chak 90/9-L, Sahiwal, in 1993.
5. Emmanuel Dina of Chak 424, Gojra, was abducted from his home and killed by Gojra police in 1995.
6. The driver of Asma Jehangir, was beaten up and her car smashed on 16th February 1995, because she was defending Salamat and Rehmat accused of 295 C.
7. Javed Masih of Hyderabad was horribly tortured and killed on 4th August 1995, by Hyderabad police.
8. Anwar Masih of Chak 232, Bavewala was tortured and killed by Faisalabad police on Christmas 1996.
9. A Christian family including women and children, were mercilessly beaten up on 20th April 1997, in a village near Burewala.

JUST A FEW RECENT EXAMPLES OF ABDUCTION AND RAPE OF CHRISTIAN GIRLS:

1. Razia Bibi of Hyderabad was so brutally gang-raped by police in April 1996, that she was very seriously injured. Christians (and some Muslims) from all over Pakistan protested.
2. Shahida Mughal, a student in Faisalabad was kidnaped by the Headmaster of that school. He forged false marriage certificate in April 1996. We have managed to get the girl back. The court case is going on.
3. Asia Parveen of Dabhan Singh Mandi, Shiekhupura, a class six student, was raped by a land lord on 16th October 1996. We are still fighting the case.
4. Nasreen Daniel of Sahiwal, a minor, was kidnaped in August 1996 and recovered in November 1996. The court case is still going on.
5. Shameem Akhtar, a minor was raped on 21st October 1996, in Chak Goga. Toba Tek Singh. The culprit was so powerful, that it took the combined force and of the Parish Priest and the Diocesan Commission for Women to get him arrested.
6. Samina Inayat, of BIR 1 5/4-L, Sahiwal was kidnaped in September 1997, by a professional criminal who was backed by a Member of the National Parliament of the ruling party. It took us 2 months to get her back. She is only 15 years old. She is now attending sewing classes in the Women Shelter Sewing School. She looks happy here.

A FEW EXAMPLES OF CHURCHES' DESECRATION:

1. Rahim Yar Khan, Multan, Church was destroyed in 1986 so thoroughly by the students of Jamait-e-Islami, that the Christians all over Pakistan were shocked. In order to stop our public protests, the government had to apologize publicly.

Gul Masih

The first person to be sentenced to death officially for blasphemy, since the death penalty became mandatory in 1991, is Gul Masih. According to Gul, he and his accuser, Mohammed Sajjad Hussain, grew up together, with only one house dividing them in their neighborhood (Chak No. 46 in eastern Sargodha, housing approximately 150 families, with a sizable Christian minority). A subedar(?) lived in the house between them, and had warm relations with Sajjad's family, but not with Gul's.

The case began on December 10, 1991, in Sargodha, about 200 miles from the capital, Islamabad. Gul Masih, a Catholic, and Mohammad Sajjad, who is Muslim, were engaged in conversation at their community water tap. The tap was broken, and Gul said that the mistri (a Muslim) who had collected the community money to fix it, was dishonest. Conflicting accounts of the rest of the conversation were offered by various eyewitnesses and the participants.

Sajjad claims that Gul cursed the mistri, verbally abused the neighborhood, and then insulted the country and the Muslim religion. Gul made vulgar remarks about the Holy Prophet, according to Sajjad, and an argument between the two men developed. Sajjad claims that Gul's brothers Rashid and Javed had to intervene in the argument in order to prevent a physical fight. Returning home, Sajjad says that he conferred with his father, Rahim Baksh, and then with a local maulvi, Hafiz Mohammad Kalyar, about the incident. Later that same day, Sajjad claims to have encountered Gul again, and to have challenged him about his earlier insults. When Gul repeated his opinions, Sajjad says another fight almost ensued. Sajjad also claims that some Christian women abused his mother.

All of this confrontationalism is entirely absent from other reports of the day's events. Father Philip of the Sargodha parish issued a statement indicating that the conversation at the water tap did turn to politics and then to religion, but that it was conversational, not abusive, an exchange, rather than a fight. Gul Masih's brother Bashir confirmed that the interlocutors parted after shaking hands and hugging each other.

Sajjad, according to the priest, Sajjad expressed the opinion that if Christians believe in three gods and believe that Jesus is the Son of God, then they must regard Mary as a prostitute. (These potentially outraging comments about Christianity are not blasphemous under contemporary applications of Pakistani law.) Gul Masih is said to have replied that he had read in a book written by a maulvi that Mohammed had eleven wives, one of whom was a minor. These writings would be controversial, since the Qur'an allows Muslim men to marry a maximum of four women, and Mohammed is traditionally understood to have had exactly that many.

Although Sajjad claims to have been immediately infuriated by this "blasphemy," Father Philip points out that no charges were filed until three days after the conversation, on December 13. In the interim, Sajjad spoke to a maulvi of the Anjuman Sipah-i-Sahaba (ASS) sect, who, along with some colleagues, encouraged him to file charges based on PPC Section 295-C.

The ASS sect is a fundamentalist organization hostile to minorities, including Muslims of conflicting ideology; they advocate making Pakistan an officially Sunni state, and removing all non-Sunni Muslims from government posts. ASS is the dominant, and most militant, religious group in Sargodha; its members are said to have a propensity for taking the law into their own hands. Sajjad denied being a member of ASS, but its flag flies over his family's house.

This context of religious tension had political element, as well. The local councillor, Aslam Kachela, became involved in the case when Sajjad and his father asked for Kachela's advice before filing the FIR; Mr. Kachela is the one who asked that the FIR be filed. A maulvi, Sher Mohammad, who told the HRCF that he had wanted to end the madness of accusations by issuing a fatwa against the undo controversy, was also influenced by Aslam Kachela, who advised that the maulvi wait before doing so. Mr. Kachela is reported to be the divisional head and patron of the ASS; he has been involved in regional religious conflict in the past and was charged with the murder of an employee of a political rival in March of 1991.

Another of Gul's brothers, Aziz Masih, was a supporter of Kachela, and had himself been elected councillor in 1983 and 1989. The present controversy arose only weeks before local elections, which seem to have been colored by conflicts between Aziz Masih and Kachela. Aziz, who had won Kachela's support in earlier years, lost this year's contest by 17 votes. Many observers blame the religious hostility surrounding Aziz's brothers Gul and Bashir (Aziz also reportedly refused to promise Kachela the votes of Christian supporters). This political situation seems to have been both a partial cause and an effect of the fate of Gul Masih with regard to the blasphemy charges. On the one hand, Gul's alleged blasphemy appears to have ruined his brother's political career, and helped divide the community's politics along strictly religious lines. On the other, the political infighting and Kachela's ties



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Saturday

19 Muharram 1419

LOOKING FOR A JOB ?

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LAHORE: Bishop condemns police baton-charge

Dawn Report

Cowasjee
Mazdak

LAHORE, May 15: Bishop of Lahore Dr Alexander John Malik has condemned the police violence against Christian women during a protest rally on Friday.

Magazines
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Young World
Images

Speaking at a special mourning at the Cathedral Church, The Mall, the bishop demanded action against the policemen responsible for the repression of peaceful participants of the rally without provocation.

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He said a large number of women also participated in the rally which was organized as part of the black day against blasphemy laws. "This is shameful for the city police who subjected them to severe torture without discrimination; many women fell unconscious and some were seen with blood oozing out of their injuries," he stated.

Back Issues

The bishop also condemned the administration for detaining even the wounded demonstrators in police lock-ups. "Hundreds of them were put in lock-ups with their wounds still bleeding," he said.

Feedback

The bishop demanded a judicial inquiry into police torture on peaceful rally participants, particularly women, and demanded release of all the arrested Christians.

Help

hrsp: Human Rights Society of Pakistan chairman S M Zafar has said the Christian leadership as well as law enforcing agencies have not exercised restraint which resulted in unfortunate incidents on Friday.

A story of madness: stoning a man to death

From I. H. Raashed

LAHORE: RELIGIOUS frenzy, inadequate force at the Khiali Shahpur police post and failure of the Gujranwala district administration to protect the precious life of a citizen were some of the factors responsible for the stoning to death of a man, Dr Sajjad Farooq, last Thursday.

The story is a chilling one of mob madness and bigotry. Farooq was declared an apostate. He was charged with desecrating the Holy Quran.

Mosque loudspeakers in Gujranwala's Asad colony and adjoining localities blared out vituperative remarks against Farooq, with maulvis asking the people to come out to kill the "Isai (Christian) doctor" for allegedly desecrating the Quran.

A case was registered against him, and he was taken to the small police post of Khiali Shahpur on the Gujranwala-Sheikhupura Road. A mob gathered outside and dragged Farooq out in handcuffs as the few policemen on duty ran for safety. The mob stoned him to death. Thrice his body was put on fire.

He had master's degrees in Arabic and Islamic Studies besides a diploma in Hikmat from the Tibbiya College. He had memorised the Holy Quran at the age of 15.

He earned his livelihood from his practice as a hakim at a small clinic in a nearby locality, Madina Colony.

For 16 years he had been living a happily married life. He was the father of six children— one daughter and five sons, the eldest being 14, a student of Class VI, and the youngest nine months' old. So hysterical was the mob that stoned Farooq that they wanted to kill his entire family. However, his wife and children had been taken to a safe place where they remained till all was over.

Farooq did not even find his grave in his hometown. Nor

the Khiali police post, about one kilometre from his house. Soon, there were announcements from the mosques, and an angry crowd gathered outside the police post which had about half-a-dozen policemen who had bolted the main gate from inside. Meanwhile, a tractor-trolley laden with bricks passed by. The crowd used the tractor to pull down the iron gate of the police post and later used the bricks to stone Farooq to death.

When asked by newsmen why the police had run away and did not resort to a lathi charge or opened fire to disperse the crowd, the in-charge of the police post, Mr Zafar Ali Shah, said that they could not do so without orders from the magistrate or the assistant commissioner, who, it is said, was also present there, but did not ask the police to disperse the crowd.

Great resentment now prevails in Gujranwala over the failure of the police to protect the life of a person in their custody. The Gujranwala Bar Association

COMMENT

tion passed a strong-worded resolution condemning the incident and the police's failure to save the life of an accused while in custody. The Bar demanded an inquiry by a High Court judge as the present inquiry ordered by the district magistrate was not acceptable because the inquiry officer was the same person who had failed to issue orders to the police to take action to disperse the crowd.

A senior lawyer of Gujranwala, Mohammad Rafiq, asked: "Why were reinforcements not sent from the city to the Khiali police post when announcements were being made from mosques, asking the people to commit an unlawful act, the murder of a citizen?" Raja Iqbalullah, Secretary of Gujranwala Chamber of Commerce

were funeral prayers held for him. He was buried quietly by a few policemen in the Mian Sahib graveyard of Lahore. It is said that he was not buried in Gujranwala as police feared that his body might be removed by miscreants for further mutilation. The body had already been badly mutilated when two motorcyclists had dragged it for a furlong or so by tying the handcuffs Farooq had been wearing at the time of his death to their vehicle. The motorcycle has since been recovered, and the people who had dragged the body arrested.

When the job was done, many, including a large number of those who had stoned him, came to know that Farooq was innocent and that he had not desecrated the Holy Quran.

Quran khawani was held in one of the same mosques on the following day from where the people were called a day before to kill him. This is one grim example of the misuse of mosque loudspeakers. Had the announcement to kill Farooq not been made over mosque loudspeakers, Farooq might still be alive.

Police are investigating the motives behind the gruesome murder. It appears that there was some enmity between Farooq and one of his neighbours, a rickshaw driver, living across the street whom the deceased had once chided for entering his house without permission. Being a staunch religious man, he kept his wife in strict purdah, and for this purpose had covered the small courtyard of his house with a roof to avoid peeping Toms. It was the same neighbour who was said to have first locked Farooq in the house (Farooq's wife was away at the time having gone to her parents living nearby in the next street).

Farooq was mercilessly beaten up by a small crowd who had assembled to condole the death of a person in the same street. The rickshaw driver had allegedly incited them by shouting that Farooq had desecrated the Holy Quran.

Some policemen took him to

and industry, wondered how it was possible that announcements were made almost simultaneously from several mosques, and yet nobody from the administration moved to save Farooq's life.

An industrialist, Mumtaz Ahmad, said that after the gruesome incident no one in Gujranwala felt secure. "You can kill any one by spreading false propaganda against him," he said.

M Ismail, a trade union leader, said that Dr Farooq's murder proved that the underprivileged had no protection, even in the custody of police.

Contrary to earlier news reports, Farooq's murder was not sectarian in nature. The residents of Asad Colony where he lived say that he was always above all sectarianism. In fact, he appeared to have little time to indulge in idle disputation.

He would recite the Quran in his spare time. His father, Qari Habibullah, an ex-serviceman and a Jamaat-Islami activist, told this correspondent that the incident was not connected with sectarianism. He appealed to the people not to give it a sectarian colour. He said that the ulama of all sects had condemned the incident and extended their full cooperation to him in pursuing the murder case of his son. Qari Habibullah appealed to the President, the Prime Minister, the Punjab Chief Minister and the Inspector-general of Police to arrest the culprits and expose the "conspiracy hatched to kill his son." He said that the saddest aspect of the whole incident was that his son was buried without anyone offering funeral prayers (Ghsibane Namaazi-Janaza was held on Wednesday).

Prof Obaidur Rahman Madani, chief of Jamaat-Islami, Gujranwala, said that the barbarism and cruelty reflected in the murder of Dr Farooq had no parallel in the history of crime in the subcontinent. The way he was stoned to death had shaken people all over the country and shown how a mob could be whipped into murderous frenzy.

Khan Mohammad Laskani and Rafiq Ahmad Naeen

Khan Mohammad Laskani and Rafiq Ahmad Naeen, two Ahmadi teachers in D.G. Khan have been charged under PPC 295-B and -C for defiling and desecrating the Holy Qur'an and insulting the Holy Prophet. The men wrote a Seraiki translation of the Qur'an, which was published in London. Maulvi Allah Wasaya, Amir of the Majlis Khatam-i-Mabuwat in D.G. Khan asked the district magistrate to file charges against the authors for blasphemy.

On October 5, 1991, a case was registered against them. The maulvi entered a plea that "the Qadiani sect followers have been declared infidels but they don't spare any occasion of hurting the religious feelings of Muslims. Now they have attempted a dirty conspiracy by rendering a Seraiki translation of Qur'an Majeed."

This case was reported by Dawn on March 26, 1992, more than five months after the charges were filed. Little more is known about the case or the fates of the defendants.

to ASS seem to have motivated the virulence with which Gul and Bashir were accused and pursued.

The FIR named both Gul and Bashir as blasphemers, and the brothers were detained by the police overnight before being transferred to jail. Five Muslims from the neighborhood testified to the brothers' good character in writing. Other Muslims testified that Bashir was entirely innocent, and that he had not participated in the conversation at all; he was released after spending a month and a half in jail. Even so, local mullahs demanded that he be retaken and that both brothers be hanged. Khutbas at Friday prayers echoed this demand, as did wall posters printed in bright red, calling for the blaspheming brothers to get their due.

Gul Masih was brought to trial for blasphemy in November of 1992. Sajjad Hussain was the only witness to testify that Gul had said anything blasphemous. Though the accuser claimed that two eye-witnesses also heard the blasphemy, both of them categorically denied that Gul was guilty of the charge. Although Sajjad was wrong on this point, and had been proved wrong previously in accusing Gul's brother Bashir, the judge accepted the rest of Sajjad's testimony without reservation. (Sajjad received no reprimand -- or the appropriate charge of qazaf -- for his false accusation of Bashir.) Gul's denials, on the other hand, were not believed. Additional Sessions Judge of Sargodha, Khan Talib Hussain Baloch, sentenced Gul Masih to death.

Amnesty International issued an Urgent Action Appeal on behalf of Gul Masih on November 10, 1992. Gul Masih is now being held in solitary confinement "because of the nature of his crime," according to Raja Pervaiz, the Deputy Superintendent of the jail. Gul's brother Aziz reports that he is being forced to clean latrines and that he was beaten up by another prisoner, who was disgusted by the crime of which Gul has been convicted. An HRCF investigative team reported that Gul was brought to an interview in handcuffs and that he looked and behaved as though he had been mistreated. An appeal has been filed with the High Court.

CHURCH CONCERNED OVER NEW EDUCATION POLICY

The Nawaz Sharif government known for its fundamentalist stance on many issues has come out with a new education policy, on March 27, 1998. It is more government controls on Church and private schools and Islamization in the name of education policy nothing short of that. The Church is right in getting worried about the implementation of such a policy. Some Church authorities, which asked not to be mentioned, did bring their concerns before the government. However, the new education policy seems to lack any change because of the Church's concerns. In fact it does not even mention the religious minorities and how they will be admitted when the test of Nazara-I-Quran (recitation of the Quran) is made compulsory for admission of a child to Class I. Perhaps we only want to admit the children of the over orthodox Muslims and leave the whole country illiterate.

The teaching of Arabic translations of the Quran has become compulsory for 11-year-old students. Absolutely nothing is mentioned in the whole education policy about religious minorities though they are about 5% of the total population of 135 million people.

The teaching of minority religions to the religious minorities is not even mentioned in the policy, despite the fact that they have been demanding religion as an examination subject for their students in place of Islamyat. This injustice to them continues.

There is absolutely no mention of denationalization of Church and other private schools in the Punjab, which were nationalized in 1972. The government has already taken the money of the salaries of the teachers from some owners of the schools, including the Church, but no mention is made of denationalization in the new policy.

There is a strong emphasis on Islamyat. It is now being made compulsory till the post graduation level. The religious minorities fear this because it will mean that they have to study Islamyat even further or take a subject, which the government prescribes, for them. The examiner knows from the subject that it is minority religionist's paper, he/she gives the student fewer marks, and thus the minority candidates suffer badly.

There is another addition of another 30,000 mosque schools in the new education policy, thus the teaching of the fundamental trend will continue strongly. There is no encouragement to the private sector; instead, The government wants to control the admission policy of all the schools. At the moment, the good Christian schools face terrible hardships because the government pushes for admissions of children they want admitted in the Christian schools. On the one hand they persecute these schools, on the other hand they want their children educated in the good English medium schools. This is an odd phenomenon, hard to explain. Perhaps it is only that they get money to get some children admitted to these institutions. This money they take on the quiet and keep for themselves. The Church schools get a bad name, but the government officer makes money on the admission, hence the Church is very reluctant to admit children outside their own merit system.

The education policy has left the language issue aside, and the confusion of teaching in different languages and styles will continue.

There are a lot of pious platitudes like, Literacy rate will jump up from 30% to 70% without studying the growth rate in the country. Another is, the Prime Minister saying, "It is an education policy of the Qasid-e-Azam". Or his statement, "Sir Syed's genius was reflected in the stress on science in the policy". These are only big claims and the policy will end up like many others drafted in the country and there is no proper implementation and education in the country.

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PAKISTAN CHRISTIANS THREATENED, BISHOP'S HOUSE STONED AFTER KORAN BURNS IN FIRE

FAISALABAD, Pakistan (UCAN) – After a Koran was damaged in a hospital fire, Pakistani Muslims protested in the streets and stoned a bishop's house here while demanding that Christian hospital workers be charged with blasphemy.

Part of a copy of Islam's holiest book burned when a store room of the civil hospital in Gojra, a town 50 kilometers south of Faisalabad, caught fire reportedly due to an electric short circuit.

Blaming Christians for the incident, Muslims throughout the town burnt tires May 25 and a mob stoned the residence of Church of Pakistan Bishop John Samuel, demanding that Christians be arrested under Section 295-B of the penal code, which penalizes blasphemy against the Koran with life imprisonment.

Bishop Samuel heads his Church's diocese of Faisalabad but lives in Gojra.

The affair underscored sentiments at a memorial service on May 24 for the late head of Faisalabad Catholic diocese, Bishop John Joseph, who took his own life May 6 in protest against the blasphemy laws and other discrimination.

Catholic Archbishop Armando Trindade of Lahore assured Christians at the service that the Joint Committee formed by the Catholic and other Christian Churches would continue the struggle against the blasphemy laws that Bishop Joseph had led until the laws are repealed.

The archbishop said that the laws, which critics claim are widely misused to settle personal grievances were swords hanging over the heads of Pakistanis, "especially the weaker sections of society."

Bishop Joseph's death initially focused attention on the laws, but India's nuclear test on May 11 has dominated the national scene.

END

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Dr. Eliezer Veguilla
Baptist Church
Havana, Cuba

I declare that this information is true and correct

Date June 6, 1997

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Name: Eliezer Veguilla 39 Years old
 Nationality: Cuban Married
 Profetion: Doctor

Dr. Eliezer Veguilla had two dreams as a young boy: to serve the Lord Jesus Christ faithfully in his church, and to become the best medical doctor in a country where few Christians have been allowed to enter top professional fields.

God has used this servant's leadership gift to deeply impact the Baptist youth in his country. Born into the home of Rev. Leoncio Veguilla, one of the pastors imprisoned in 1965 along with over 50 pastors and misionaries, he graduated in 1981 as a medical doctor, specializing in internal medicine, intensive therapy and geriatrics at the Salvador Allende hospital of Havana; which is also where he was detained as he left work for home one day. His "crime" was being a Christian leader.

On January 24, 1994, He was held and interrogated for 47 days by state security agents, without formal charges, and submitted during his arrest to various types of torture such as being switched back and forth between below-freezing and boiling-hot chambers; having to sleep with two strategically placed firearms aiming at his bed; a mock execution; misinformation and false information regarding his family; being awakened at all hours of the night for intense interrogations, etc. There were days in which, for over 16 hours at a time, they kept me in total darkness, where he couldn't even see his own hands.

One day they showed him a ferocious-looking bear, with teeth and claws big enough to tear a man to pieces in a few seconds. A short time later they threw him in a dark cell with what he thought was the same bear; but soon he realized that this one's teeth and claws had been removed and was chained. His torturers expected him to panic and yell for mercy; however, he sat in a corner of the cell, and, to their astonishment, waited quietly for them to come and get him out.

On another occasion, they told him that he'd be executed by a firing squad. As they "prepared" him for it, he saw all the signs that it was going to take place that same day. It was one of the most

difficult moments of his entire life. A few minutes earlier he had heard screams of terror, and then gunfire, as if someone else had just been executed. They then took him into the room where he was to "die." A trail of blood, as though a corpse had just been dragged, ran from the blood-splattered wall to which he'd be tied, all the way to another exit door. The soldiers were already lined up, holding their rifles. As they stood in position, their leader asked him if he wanted to be blindfolded. Everything indicated that very soon he would be in the presence of his Lord.

"Don't cover my eyes; you are going to kill me without a reason, and I would like to face my killers. Nevertheless, God loves all of you! Jesus lives; Cuba para Cristo!" was all I could say at that point. I heard the order, "Fire!" and then just the click of the triggers and the laughter of the soldiers. The entire thing had been a parody! With the little strength left in me at that moment, I kept yelling "Cuba for Christ!" while my torturers continued to laugh", Veguilla said.

The authorities, unable to find evidence whatsoever to convict him, placed him under house arrest; which kept him from getting involved in any Christian activities. He and his family became the target of constant surveillance and threats by officials.

"Dreaming is free; to fulfil those dreams may cost everything, but it's all worth it," said this young man involved in the distribution of thousands of Bibles, New Testaments and Christian materials to believers throughout the island.

"We were once conducting a very special evangelistic campaign with the movie 'Jesus,' which was scheduled to be shown at a rural church, where, in an effort to keep people from watching it, the police cut off the power. However, we had a small generator, and since the church was the only place that had power, the whole town came out and watched it."

He founded the ministry "Harp of David" with a group of talented young musicians who volunteer their gifts and tour the western part of the island. They sing about the love of God in many churches, and the goal of all Cuban believers to win "Cuba for Christ." This is also the title of an album they produced, financed in part by Christians abroad, but entirely with the music of Cuban composers.

As the vice-president of the Baptist Youth World Alliance, a member of the commission of Human Rights for the same organization and, along with his wife, very active members of their church, Eliezer, his wife Elizabeth and children Ediel and Elienai on Sept. 15, 1995, were forced out of the country to live in the U.S., despite their desire of continuing the work of Jesus in their beloved island.

My wish for my beloved homeland in this moments, is the same one for which all the Cuban believers have been fighting all along: **CUBA FOR CHRIST!**

**NATIONAL SPIRITUAL ASSEMBLY
OF THE
BAHÁ'ÍS OF THE UNITED STATES**

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**Statement by Dr. Firuz Kazemzadeh
before the Subcommittee on International Operations and Human Rights
of the House International Relations Committee
June 16, 1998**

THE STATUS OF BAHÁ'ÍS IN IRAN

Good morning. I am Firuz Kazemzadeh, professor emeritus of history at Yale University and Secretary for External Affairs of the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the United States, the national governing body of the 130,000-member American Bahá'í community.

It gives me great pleasure to convey to the subcommittee the gratitude of the American Bahá'í community for the unfailing leadership of the US Congress in championing the rights of the oppressed Bahá'í religious minority in Iran. The chairman and the ranking minority member of this subcommittee, Representatives Christopher Smith and Tom Lantos, have been instrumental in the passage since 1982 of seven Congressional Resolutions calling for the emancipation of the Iranian Bahá'í community.

Following the Islamic revolution in Iran dozens of Bahá'ís were being attacked and executed every year and hundreds were being jailed and tortured. Together with annual resolutions by the UN Commission on Human Rights and the UN General Assembly condemning Iran's treatment of the Bahá'ís, the Congressional resolutions cast a spotlight of international censure on the Iranian regime and helped to dissuade it from continuing the bloody pogrom against the Bahá'ís.

The status of the Bahá'ís in Iran is unambiguous. Classified as "unprotected infidels," the approximately 300,000 members of the Bahá'í Faith have no legal rights. Killing a Bahá'í does not constitute homicide. A Bahá'í may not legally enforce a contract, inherit property, be employed by the government, collect pensions earned over a lifetime of service, or attend universities. Bahá'ís are routinely jailed and their personal properties are confiscated. A secret government document published in 1993 by the UN Commission on Human Rights confirms that anti-Bahá'í actions are part of the Iranian government's deliberate policy. Produced by Iran's Supreme Revolutionary Cultural Council and endorsed by the Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Khamenei, this "blueprint" sets forth guidelines for dealing with "the Bahá'í question" so that the Bahá'ís' "progress and development shall be blocked."

Executions, Death Sentences and Imprisonments

Since 1979 more than 200 Bahá'ís have been killed and fifteen Bahá'í leaders have disappeared and are presumed dead. As of today sixteen Bahá'ís are in prison because of their religion. Four of the prisoners are on death row, two of them on charges of apostasy. Arbitrary arrests occur regularly in many parts of the country. In the last three years some 200 Bahá'ís have been detained for periods ranging from forty-eight hours to six months in cities such as Yazd, Esfahan, Semnan, Babol, Kermanshah, Mashhad, Shiraz, Tarkabon, Ahvaz, Kerman, Karaj, and Tehran.

It has been apparent for some time that the authorities have adopted a strategy of focussing their efforts, successively, on Bahá'í communities in different parts of the country, in order to determine forms of pressure that may succeed in intimidating their members and suffocating the religion's spiritual life. Currently, the province of Khorasan, of which Mashhad is the capital, has become the focal point of this campaign. Of the sixteen Bahá'ís now in prison, ten are from Khorasan and, of those, seven are from Mashhad. Of particular concern currently is the situation of Mr. Ruhollah Rohani who has been in prison in Mashhad since September 1997 without permission for relatives to visit him. His fate is not clear.

Recent events in Khorasan

On May 1, 1998 authorities in Mashhad surrounded and raided the home of a Bahá'í family where a class for youth was being held. The teacher, Mrs. Sonia Ahmadi, and the owner of the house, Mr. Manuchehr Ziai, along with twelve students aged fifteen and sixteen, were arrested and detained for one week. They were hastily sentenced without having the chance to engage a lawyer. Mrs. Ahmadi and Mr. Ziai were sentenced to three years' imprisonment while the twelve students were released on parole, having been given, despite their age, suspended sentences of five years' imprisonment to be activated should they ever again commit the "crime" of taking part in Bahá'í moral education classes.

In Birjand Mr. Jamaledin Hajipur and Mr. Mansur Mehrabi (a.k.a. Mansur Mehrabkhani) were arrested last year and sentenced without charges to two years' imprisonment and confiscation of their property. They appealed, and the Court of Appeals returned an extraordinary verdict confirming the lower court's sentence. The Appeals Court stated that "Baha'ism is recognized as an illegal organization," thus making a mockery of the Iranian government's claim that Bahá'ís retain their right to the observance of their religious beliefs.

The verdict brought against the defendants mentions that they have "regularly been holding ... meetings on 'Bahá'í Life'," adducing such activities as evidence of criminal behavior, including "espionage" for the state of Israel. It is startling that the court judgement accepts as evidence of illegal activity such actions as holding classes for Bahá'í youth in the English language, science, and technology. The verdict also notes, without embarrassment on the part of the Iranian judicial authorities, that the two men carried out these activities "with the intention of improving the standard of education of Bahá'í students and their families." The context in which the court decision should be seen is that the Iranian regime has excluded Bahá'ís from higher education solely on the grounds of their religious affiliation.

No change in situation since the election of President Khatami

We have been asked whether there have been any changes in the attitude of the government towards Iran's Bahá'í citizens since President Khatami took office. We regret that, despite our initial hopes, events such as those mentioned above demonstrate that there has been no discernible improvement. The recent events in Mashhad may, indeed, indicate an intensification of efforts to terrorize and intimidate the community.

For a Western mind it is difficult to understand why a regime which is gradually permitting a degree of pluralism in political and social life should be bent on suppressing an apolitical minority that threatens no one or to understand why other voices in Iran's political spectrum would likewise be unwilling to grant even minimal civil rights to Iran's Bahá'í citizens. The explanation lies in the sinister interaction of political opportunism and unexamined religious prejudice that determine all aspects of this matter.

The current circumstances should be seen in the context of the unique nature of the persecution to which Iranian Bahá'ís have been subjected for over a century. The Iranian Bahá'í community has frequently served as a scapegoat used by various factions struggling for political ascendancy. This has been the case regardless of the changes in political or dynastic regimes. Whenever political leaders have felt a need to divert public attention from some economic, social, or political issue, they have found the Bahá'í community an easy target because of the senseless hostility and prejudice inculcated in the public by generations of ecclesiastical propaganda.

Only two weeks ago the Iranian state news agency cited a 1986 declaration made by Al-Azhar University in Cairo, the most prestigious educational institution in the Muslim world, to the effect that "any Muslim adopting the faith of Bahaism would be considered an apostate." The news article stated that the Bahá'í Faith "is false and it has nothing to do with Islam, or even with Judaism or Christianity."

Earlier this year a committee of senior clerics in Saudi Arabia issued a religious decree, or fatwa, repudiating the concept of "the unity of religions" and rejecting the idea that different religions may co-exist as equals. The fatwa states that "there exists no true religion on earth except Islam. All previous religions are abrogated, and those people who follow any religion but Islam are not acceptable in the sight of God." And further, "Muhammad is the last Prophet, and there is no other Prophet to follow Muhammad, who is the Prophet for the entire human race."

The belief that Muhammad was the last prophet of God and that with him divine revelation came to an end underlies the continued persecution of the Bahá'ís in Iran in spite of the Bahá'í acknowledgement of the divine origin of Islam and other religions. The Government of Iran has repeatedly stated that the Bahá'í Faith is not a religion but a political conspiracy. To recognize the Bahá'í Faith as a religion would, therefore, be tantamount to denying the principles of Islam as understood by its clerical hierarchies.

Continued international pressure is essential to the protection of the Bahá'í community

To sum up, we see no evidence of a change in policy toward Iran's Bahá'í minority. The Bahá'ís in that country continue to be denied jobs, education, and access to many state services, solely because of their religious affiliation. They are outside the rule of law and are not protected under the constitution. Their homes and properties are randomly expropriated. They continue to be imprisoned and mistreated in an effort to compel them to recant their faith and to convert to Islam. There is no evidence that the secret plan adopted by the Supreme Revolutionary Cultural Council for the extermination of the Bahá'í community has been abrogated or withdrawn.

The 1997 UN General Assembly resolution on human rights in Iran, calling for the emancipation of the Bahá'í community, offers the clearest expression of what the international community expects of the Iranian authorities. Any relaxation of pressure in the Bahá'í case or any omission of reference to it in UN resolutions would have the inevitable effect of encouraging factions within the regime to compete with one another in demonstrating their determination to root out "the Bahá'í heresy." The effect would be to jeopardize the achievements of the international community, first of all the United States, in protecting the beleaguered Bahá'ís from the most brutal forms of repression.

It is not the actions of the Bahá'ís but the circumstances of Iranian history that have conspired to make "the Bahá'í case" a litmus test of sincerity for Iranian public figures who represent themselves as voices of reform and progress.

We call upon the Government of the United States to continue playing a primary role in defending the principles of religious freedom and all human rights throughout the world.

Testimony of Mr. Le Tan Buu
Hearing on Religious Persecution
House Subcommittee on Immigration Operations and Human Rights
June 16, 1998 - U.S. House Rayburn Building

Mr. Chairman,
Members of the Subcommittee,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

My name is Le Tan Buu. I was a senator of the Republic of Vietnam National Assembly before 1975. I spent 13 years in 14 communist prisons and concentration camps in North and South Vietnam. Because of my association with the Hoa Hao Buddhist Church (HBC) leadership I was constantly interrogated by Vietnamese communist cadres. I resettled in the U.S. in 1992 as a former political prisoner, and I have been active in the propagation of Hoa Hao Buddhism overseas since then.

It is with a great sense of honor and responsibility that I represent the HBC Council of Elders Overseas to testify before this Subcommittee on a subject of enormous importance to our Church today. Although the HBC has been the main target of reprisals by the Vietnamese communist government since 1975, virtually no attention has been paid by world media to its atrocities. I thank you, Mr. Chairman and members of the Subcommittee, for today's opportunity. Since Hoa Hao Buddhism is not widely known outside of Vietnam, let me give a brief description. As a simplified Neo-Buddhist sect, Hoa Hao Buddhism was founded in 1939 by Mr. Huynh Phu So, who was the Prophet and the Reincarnation of the Tay An Buddha. Renown for his healing power, he saved thousands of lives. He was the leader of a most effective armed movement against French colonialism and the communist Viet Minh Front (later called the Communist Party of Vietnam). The HBC has rapidly matured as a civic organization as well as an evangelist church of over 4 million followers most of whom lived in the Mekong Delta, a rice granary in Vietnam.

Only two weeks following the takeover of Saigon in 1975, the Vietnamese communist government fully implemented its "force to death" policy, ordering the dissolution of the entire HBC hierarchy at all levels from the Central Council of Hoa Hao Buddhist Laymen to councils at the provincial, district, and hamlet levels. They confiscated religious scriptures and texts and all HBC properties including the Hoa Hoa University, administrative offices, seminaries, general medicine clinics, temples, and shrines. For the next few years, several thousands of Hoa Hao clergymen and adherents were arrested during successive raids; 2,700 preaching lecturers and 6,000 adepts were ordered upon release from concentration camps to stop preaching in their localities. Worst of all, hundreds of high-ranking clergymen and laymen were tortured, sentenced to death, or executed.

Immediately after the U.S. announced the lifting of the embargo, Hanoi began a well-coordinated plan to discredit religious leaders and to neutralize movements for religious

freedom in Vietnam. In the last few years, the Vietnamese communist government has intensified their systematic effort to curb HBC activities. Hoa Hao notables and dignitaries such as Elders Le Quang Liem and Nguyen Van Phu , and Clergyman Nguyen Van Trieu attempted to reactivate the HBC to no avail. Gatherings of Hoa Hao Buddhist adepts for daily scripture recitals at HBC temples and fellowship houses are forbidden. Any adherents caught to visit the Holy Land are harassed, intimidated, or arrested by local policemen. All religious functions at the Holy Land are banned.

What the HBC has suffered in recent months is consistent with Hanoi's policies and behaviors towards human rights and religious freedom. More religious leaders and political dissidents are presently placed under house arrest, re-arrested, or imprisoned. Newly issued Executive Decree 31/CP allows local police to place political suspects under administrative detention for up to two years. As a result, local police has rearrested Elder Tran Huu Duyen, 82 years old, and imprisoned Elder Nam Lien, a high ranking HBC activist . (Both have been adopted by Congresswoman Loretta Sanchez in the U.S. Congress sponsored "Adopt a Religious Leader" campaign.) Last week, this year's Anniversary of the HBC Founding Day (observed on the 18th day of the fifth month of the Lunar Year) at the Holy Land could not take place due to unjustifiable restrictions imposed on its celebration. Despite these violations, President Clinton has recently granted Hanoi the Jackson-Vanik waiver.

Considering the above developments, Hoa Hao Elders in and outside of Vietnam urge Congress and the Clinton Administration to hold Hanoi accountable to their violations of religious rights. "Constructive engagement" in trade must be conditioned upon progress made by Hanoi with certifiable benchmarks. H.R. 2431 (the Freedom from Religious Persecution Act) would be effective as it would subject the Vietnamese communist government to appropriate sanctions in return for its support of religious persecution. The overwhelming approval of H.R. 2431 by the House shows the willingness of Congress in response to Hanoi's behaviors with effective legislation. It has also sent a clear message to President Clinton and opponents of the bill who want to trade with Vietnam at the expense of the ongoing sufferings in of the Vietnamese people. His efforts to weaken the bill will certainly encourage Hanoi to insolently intensify its violations of religious rights. H.R. 2431 is indeed a renewed source of optimism for all those who cherish religious freedom, for people of all faiths --including over four million Hoa Hao Buddhists in Vietnam.



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