

FAITH UNDER FIRE

Documenting the Persecution of **Christians in Pakistan**



REPORT : JANUARY 2026

Faith Under Fire: Documenting the Persecution of Christians in Pakistan

Introduction

Christians in Pakistan constitute one of the country's largest religious minority communities, yet they remain among its most vulnerable and marginalised groups. Recent census data and independent estimates suggest that Christians number just over 3.3 million people, accounting for roughly 1.4 per cent of Pakistan's population, with the majority residing in Punjab and, to a lesser extent, in urban centres of Sindh. Within this demographic, many Christians occupy the lowest rungs of the socio-economic hierarchy, employed disproportionately in sanitation work, domestic labour and other low-paid, insecure sectors. Their position at the intersection of minority religious status, entrenched class divisions and, in some cases, caste-based prejudice creates a structural environment in which discrimination and abuse are both more likely and less likely to be effectively remedied.

Despite constitutional guarantees of equality before the law and freedom of religion, the everyday reality for many Christians is marked by systematic exclusion and an elevated risk of targeted violence. Over the past several decades, human rights organisations and local monitoring groups have documented hundreds of incidents involving attacks on churches, Christian neighbourhoods and individual believers, alongside routine reports of discrimination in education, employment and access to justice. These incidents range from threats and social boycotts to large-scale mob violence that has devastated entire communities.

A central driver of this vulnerability is the misuse of Pakistan's blasphemy provisions, particularly sections 295-B and 295-C of the Penal Code, which prescribe severe penalties, including life imprisonment and mandatory death sentences, for certain forms of alleged sacrilege. Since the late 1980s, civil society monitoring has recorded at least 2,793 individuals of various faiths accused under blasphemy laws, with Christians constituting around 11 per cent of these cases despite their small share of the population. Over this period, at least 104 people have been killed in extra-judicial incidents linked to blasphemy allegations, including lynchings and mob attacks.

This report is situated within that broader context of structural vulnerability and escalating risk. It is intended to support efforts to ensure that Christians in Pakistan can live and worship as equal citizens, enjoying the full protection of the law and the fundamental rights guaranteed in the country's constitutional framework.

January 2026

Abduction/Forced Conversion/Marriage

S No.	Date	Victim	Religion	Place	Culprit
1	22.01.26	Sataish Maryam	Christian	Sahiwal	Ali Haider
2	10.01.26	A minor girl	Christian	Sargodha	
3	05.01.26	Aini Masih	Christian	Sargodha	
4	05.01.26	Aneeqa Fiaz	Christian	Sheikhupura	

Murder

5	01.01.26	Kashif Masih	Christian	Gujranwala	
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Torture/Assault

6	29.01.26	Karen Bibi	Christian	Punjab	Waqar Ali
7	21.01.26	Zaheed Masih	Christian	Bahawalpur	Ali Azhar
8	26.01.26	Zarnab Noor	Christian	Lahore	
9	18.01.26	Tanveer Masih	Christian	Sialkot	
10	12.01.26	Imran Masih	Christian	Shahkot	

Blasphemy

11	14.01.26	Saleem Ishtiaq	Christian	Islamabad	
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Worship Places/Graveyard Desecration

12	04.01.26	Tak Memorial Church	Christian	Kasur	
13	05.01.26	Church	Christian	Clarkabad, Lahore	

Details of the Incident:

1 - Abduction/Forced Conversion/Marriage:

1. 22.01.26

A 13-year-old Christian girl Sataish Maryam was abducted in Sahiwal, Punjab. Her father was brutally beaten for trying to protect her.

According to reports, the alleged abductor is Ali Haider, son of Gulzar, reportedly from the Muslim Jatt community. After the abduction, the girl was allegedly forcibly converted to Islam and coerced into marriage with Ali Haider.



2. 10.01.26

A Christian girl was abducted, raped and forcibly converted to Islam.



3. 05.01.26

A minor Christian girl Aini Masih was abducted on 5th Jan from Maryam Town, Sargodha. She was raped and forcibly converted to Islam. Her family is devastated, yet the state is doing nothing to recover the girl.



4. 05.01.26

Aneeqa Fiaz is only 13.

According to her parents, she was taken from her home in Village Asa Nagri, Sheikhpura — a child who, just yesterday, should have been worrying about schoolwork, playing with friends, and the ordinary small joys that make childhood feel safe. Instead, her family now says she has been kidnapped, and that what followed was even more horrifying: an alleged forced conversion to Islam and coerced marriage.



2 – Murder

5. 01.01.26

A Christian man named Kashif Masih, a father of 3 children, was brutally murdered in the early morning of January 1, 2026, in Langowal village, Gujranwala. The perpetrators remained at large.



3 – Torture/Assault

6. 29.01.26

Waqar Ali publicly assaulted Christian woman Karen Bibi — he grabbed her by the hair & dragged her through the market in broad daylight. He had borrowed money from the Christian family. When Karen asked for it back, Waqar attacked her and threatened her with false blasphemy charges (295-C) to intimidate and silence her.



7. 21.01.26

On Jan 21, 2026 (~11:30 AM) in Bahawalpur, Christian kiln worker Zaheed Masih was on his way home from Bhatta No. 2 when he was allegedly doused with petrol and set on fire over a previous minor argument. The accused, Ali Azhar is a police constable.

According to Zahid Masih, the altercation began after Muhammad Ali Azhar repeatedly hurled derogatory abuse at him. When Zahid Masih calmly questioned the verbal harassment, the situation escalated. The assailant reportedly poured petrol on Zahid Masih's face and set fire to him, intending to burn him alive, but he was saved by the timely intervention of the Christian community.



8. 26.01.26

A 13-year-old minor Christian girl, Zarnab Noor, was beaten and her head was shaved by the Muslim Family. Zarnab was working as a domestic helper in Johar Town, Lahore, where, over a minor dispute, she was subjected to torture.



9. 18.01.26

Sialkot: 24-yr-old Christian farm worker Tanveer Masih, with an intellectual disability, was brutally beaten by his employer for being late — then left to suffer, while police refused to register an FIR to protect the powerful.



10. 12.01.26

Imran Masih, a Christian laborer from Chak No. 93 RB, Chatti Jaranwala, near Shahkot, has been abducted and forced into bonded labor by a powerful brick kiln owner. His wife, Gulnaz Imran, a mother of five young children, has publicly appealed for help, stating that her husband is being unlawfully detained and subjected to inhumane labor conditions.



4 – Blasphemy

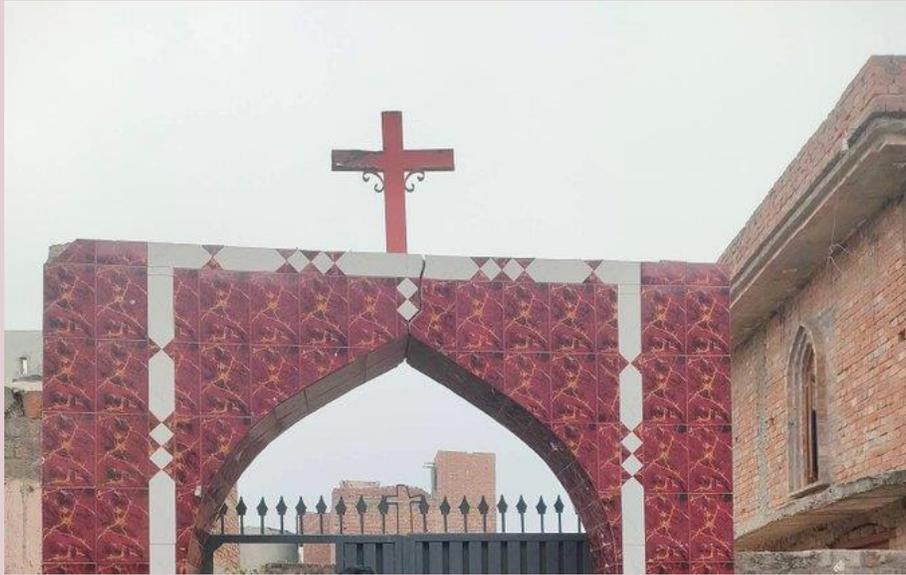
11. 14.01.26

Pakistan Christian Saleem Ishtiaq, a sanitation worker in Islamabad, arrested for allegedly of posting blasphemous content on Facebook. As a result, he was arrested for electronic crimes PECA & blasphemy 295c PPC Mandatory Penalty death sentence.



13.05.01.26

Religious extremists attacked the Church in Ghanaykay village, Kot Radha Kishan (Kasur), on January 5, 2026. The accused unlawfully entered the Church, desecrated the Holy Bible by tearing its pages, and ransacked the premises, spreading fear and deep distress among the local Christian community.



Conclusion

The evidence reviewed in this report shows that the persecution of Christians in Pakistan is rooted in a combination of discriminatory laws, deep-seated social prejudice and a persistent climate of impunity, rather than in isolated or exceptional incidents. Christians, who constitute a small minority of the population, experience a disproportionate exposure to blasphemy allegations, mob violence and systematic discrimination in education, employment and access to justice, leaving them structurally vulnerable in almost every sphere of public life. The data on blasphemy cases and extra-judicial killings, together with recent episodes of large-scale mob attacks on Christian neighbourhoods and churches, highlights how quickly hostility can escalate into collective punishment when inflammatory rhetoric and weak law-enforcement responses intersect. At the same time, the testimonies and case studies presented here demonstrate that this persecution is experienced not only in spectacular episodes of violence, but also in the quiet, daily erosion of dignity, opportunity and **security**.

Addressing this situation requires more than ad hoc relief or symbolic gestures; it demands sustained legal, institutional and social reforms that tackle the drivers of persecution at their source. Key priorities include revisiting and reforming blasphemy provisions and their procedures, strengthening accountability for officials who fail to prevent or respond to anti-Christian violence, and ensuring effective protection mechanisms for at-risk communities and individuals. Equally important are initiatives to challenge hateful narratives, promote interfaith solidarity and amplify Christian voices in local and national decision-making. If these steps are pursued with political will and broad-based support, they can begin to dismantle the structures that enable persecution and open the space for Christians in Pakistan to live and worship as equal citizens. In doing so, Pakistan would move closer to fulfilling its constitutional promises of freedom of religion and equality before the law, and to honouring the inherent **dignity** of all its people.