

Pakistani Christians Alarmed as Country's Blasphemy Laws Become More Stringent

Read Time: 1 Minute 51 Seconds

For years, Pakistan's stringent blasphemy laws have made Christians within the country nervous and even frightened for their lives and livelihoods.

But this week, the country's Muslim-majority National Assembly has turned up the heat, and it has sparked major alarm among believers residing in Pakistan. The governing body passed the Criminal Laws (Amendment) Bill, which increases the punishment for insulting the Prophet Muhammad's companions, wives, family members and other sacred personalities to 10 years in prison along with a fine of 1 million rupees (approximately \$4,424 USD).

The previous law, as it was written, punished violators by up to three years in prison.

International human rights activists have criticized the amendment. Christian Solidarity Worldwide, a United Kingdom-based organization that monitors global persecution, says that lawmakers passed the bill without debate and "have ignored the long-standing demands of civil society organizations and minority community leaders for the repeal of the blasphemy laws."

Mervyn Thomas, CSW founder, said in a statement: "CSW is deeply concerned by the provisions in this Bill, which were approved without debate by Pakistan's parliament despite the fact that existing blasphemy legislation has resulted in extra-judicial killings and countless incidents of mob violence based on false accusations. Policymakers have ignored

the long-standing demands of civil society organizations and minority community leaders for the repeal of the blasphemy laws or at the very least the introduction of procedural amendments to curb the misuse of these laws.”

says that “Christians in Pakistan are considered second-class citizens and face discrimination in every aspect of life. Jobs that are seen as low, dirty and degrading are reserved for Christians by the authorities, who continue to punish them to the margins of society.

“Pakistan’s notorious blasphemy laws target all religious minorities, but affect the Christian minority in particular. Roughly a quarter of all blasphemy accusations target Christians, who make up 1.8% of the population.”

❑ Despite the persecution, thousands flock to Christian crusades in Pakistan. Chris Mikkelson Ministries has hosted nearly 20 crusades in the predominantly Muslim country as the evangelist’s organization labors to bring the gospel of Jesus Christ to the hungry people of the Middle East.

And their efforts have not been in vain. In July 2022, Mikkelson said he has seen over 1 million people in Pakistan receive Jesus as their Lord and savior during the crusades, and he and his team have seen multitudes of people headed and countless miracles take place.

“It’s where God told me to go,” Mikkelson told Charisma News. {eo}

Shawn A. Akers is the online editor at Charisma Media.