

Police: Armed Men Damage, Vandalize Pakistani Church in Land Dispute

A group of armed men vandalized a church in eastern Pakistan before fleeing the scene, a local police official said Monday.

The incident in the village of Kala Shahkaku in Punjab province took place on Saturday and was apparently not sectarian but connected to a land dispute involving the church, according to police official Shahid Akram.

An image from the attack, broadcast on social media, showed a cross, which had originally hung above the entrance door of the church, lying atop a pile of rubble. However, the extent of damage to the church could not be determined from the photograph.

Akram said police have detained two suspects and were still conducting searches for the main culprits.

“Our initial investigation shows that some local Muslims orchestrated this attack over a lingering land dispute,” he said, adding that “all those who are linked to this sad incident will be arrested.”

Human rights activists and local Christian leaders condemned the vandalism and urged the Punjab government to arrest all those linked to the attack.

Pakistan’s minority Christians have faced such attacks in the past. Last month, Pakistan’s independent Human Rights Commission in its annual report gave the authorities a failing grade, saying too little was being done to protect the country’s minorities and other vulnerable segments of the population, including women and children. {eo}

The Associated Press