

Ambassador Zaheer Pervaiz Khan
Embassy of Pakistan to Norway
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Your Excellency,

I am writing to express my concern regarding the kidnapping, forced conversions and forced marriages of underage minority girls in Pakistan.

In one of the recent cases, Arzoo Raja, a 13 year old girl, was abducted by a 45 year old man who forced her to convert to Islam and marry him. In court, the judge approved the marriage and refused to acknowledge the girl's age. Due to peaceful demonstrations by civil society organizations, the Court has now assured that the previous judgements will be revisited under the Child Marriage Restraint Act, and that justice will be done.

Your Excellency, I hear worrying reports of forced conversions of minority girls in Pakistan, indicating a lack of protection. Earlier this year another minor girl, 14 year old Maira Shahbaz, was abducted and forcibly converted and married to an older Muslim man. The court first made the decision to have her stay with her abductor, despite the marriage contract being false. She later managed to escape and is getting help from a lawyer.

Christian and Hindu minor girls are especially vulnerable to this type of persecution. The Sindh province is one of the only provinces that has implemented the Child Marriage Restraint Act, a law that makes it an offence to marry a girl below 16 and a boy below 18 years old. Implementing similar legislation would enable other provinces to protect minority girls from violations more efficiently.

I appreciate Pakistan's efforts to reduce forced marriages and conversions by implementing laws to prevent this. Therefore, I am disappointed to hear reports that minority girls are not sufficiently protected against attacks. I believe that more efforts are needed to address the issue of forced conversion and marriage.

I, therefore, humbly petition your intervention to ensure that:

- Underage minority girls who have been forcibly married and converted are protected and provided with fair trials and legal aid.
- Laws to stop the practice of forced marriages and forced conversions of minority girls, such as the child marriage restraint act, are implemented in all the provinces of Pakistan.

Yours sincerely,