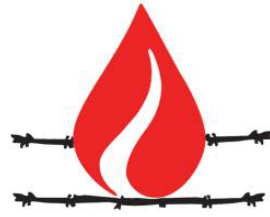


# Organization for Defending Victims of Violence (ODVV)

## UPR Submission

### 42th session of UPR Working Group (Jan- Feb 2023)

#### Pakistan



سازمان دفاع از قربانیان خشونت  
Organization for Defending Victims  
of Violence

[www.odvv.org](http://www.odvv.org)

[info@odvv.org](mailto:info@odvv.org)

## **About ODVV**

1. The Organization for Defending Victims of Violence (ODVV) is a non-governmental, non-profit, non-political organization in Special Consultative Status to ECOSOC. ODVV was established in 1988 in Tehran and has been active in the field of human rights and humanitarian activities.

2. ODVV is also associated to the United Nations Department of Public Information (UNDPI), a member of the Conference of Non-Governmental Organizations (CONGO), AMAN Network of Rehabilitation Centers in the Middle East and North Africa and International Rehabilitation Council for Torture Victims (IRCT). ODVV has cooperated with international organizations in a variety of issues and has working relations with many NGOs in Iran and around the globe.

3. ODVV is focused on promoting human rights, supporting victims of violence, empowering Iranian civil society, and offering human rights consultations to the Iranian institutions and organizations. ODVV is actively involved in running various human rights education courses, workshops, seminars, and conferences. Other activities include:

- Participation in UN Commission on Human Rights and the Human Rights Council sessions in Geneva;
- Publication of different books and booklets on human rights such as Rights of the Child, Unilateral Coercive Measures (Economic Sanctions), Racism, Racial Discrimination, Islamophobia and Xenophobia;
- Publishing *Defenders* Quarterly (in English), human rights news and developments *Weekly* (in Farsi), daily updating ODVV websites in English, Farsi and Arabic;
- Internship for Iranian and international students.

4. ODVV is submitting the following report on the human rights situation of Pakistan, as well as the human rights situations caused by its foreign policy, in order to contribute to the improvement of human rights both inside and outside the country.

## **Minority Rights**

5. ODVV is deeply concerned about actions of repression on non-Sunni Muslims in Pakistan. Although the Pakistani government has unveiled efforts to reduce tension and support religious pluralism, Shia Muslims still tend to face discrimination in both public and private spheres. Attacks against Shia Muslims, who make up between 10–20% of Pakistani Muslims, have also been carried out. In March 2022, 62 people were killed in an attack by a suicide bomber on a Shia Mosque in Peshawar during Friday prayers.
6. Several reports on anti-Shia hate speech have been ignored by the police in Pakistan and on the contrary, fake cases from the other side are being investigated by the police.
7. It is despite the fact that the government supported 15 recommendations<sup>1</sup> about ensuring minorities rights and freedom of religion and belief, at the previous cycle in 2017.

## **Freedom of religion and belief**

8. When an influential Sunni religious scholar, Maulana Dr Adil Khan, was killed in an attack in October 2020, hardcore Sunni groups publicly accused Shia Muslims of orchestrating the attack. The anti-Shia Muslim campaign first began gathering pace on social media in September, demanding that Shia Muslims were declared heretics. The hashtag “infidel, infidel, Shias are infidel” began trending. Then, in mid-September 2020, a march organised by Sunni Muslim groups, gathered in Karachi over two days to call Shia Muslims “unbelievers” and “blasphemers” and called for their beheading. It was the largest anti-Shia march seen in decades in Pakistan, and was copied in other cities including the capital Islamabad.
9. Shia Muslims also fear their religious freedom is being legislated away. In July 2020, Tahaffuz-e-Bunyade-e-Islam (Protection of Foundation of Islam) Bill was passed by Punjab assembly, which supported only the Sunni interpretation of Islam, provoking a huge backlash from the Shia community.<sup>2</sup>
10. The Pakistani government did not amend or repeal blasphemy law provisions that have provided a pretext for violence against religious minorities and have left them

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<sup>1</sup> Recommendations No: 152.166, 152.165, 152.163, 152.147, 152.77, 152.182, 152.81, 152.84, 152.75, 152.55, 152.248, 152.83, 152.183, 152.168, 152.164

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/oct/21/pakistani-shias-live-in-terror-as-sectarian-violence-increases>

vulnerable to arbitrary arrest and prosecution. The fact that in the previous cycle, Pakistan has noted 21 recommendations on freedom of religion and belief, shows the complications that the country is facing in attempts to protect this fundamental right.

### **Right to health**

11. Covid-19 remained a serious concern in Pakistan's overcrowded prisons, during the pandemic. The provincial government of Sindh released 64 prisoners as a preventative measure, but appeared to be the only province to do so. Prison authorities in Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa stopped reporting infection numbers in prisons.<sup>3</sup>
12. According to Pakistan's Human Rights Ministry, prisoners face poor conditions and receive inadequate medical care<sup>4</sup>.

### **Violence against women and girls**

13. Although Pakistan has taken positive steps towards protecting women and girls from violence for example by passing Anti-Honour Killing Law, still it remains a serious problem. It is worth mentioning that Pakistan has supported 53 recommendations<sup>5</sup> on women's rights in the last UPR cycle.

### **Recommendations**

ODVV urges Pakistan government to:

14. Investigate all cases of violence against religious minorities and hold the perpetrators accountable.
15. Take measures to strengthen the work of local human rights institutions and groups.
16. Ensure the protection of the right to freedom of religion or belief, expression, association and peaceful assembly by amending blasphemy law and respecting, protecting and fulfilling the rights of all religious minorities.
17. Allocate sufficient resources to public health and medical services.
18. Strengthen policies and programmes on nutrition, vaccination and medical services aiming to provide affordable and quality health services for all.
19. Take broader efforts to protect women against violence, including more state prosecutions of "honour killings," reformed criminal laws, and greater access for

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.amnesty.org/en/location/asia-and-the-pacific/south-asia/pakistan/report-pakistan/>

<sup>4</sup> [https://www.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/313615\\_PAKISTAN-2021-HUMAN-RIGHTS-REPORT.pdf](https://www.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/313615_PAKISTAN-2021-HUMAN-RIGHTS-REPORT.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> Recommendations Nu 152.: 273, 258, 255, 253, 239, 220, 235, 218, 229, 199, 56, 50, 214, 244, 243, 264, 249, 246, 270, 267, 268, 263, 257, 234, 78, 57, 55, 241, 8.1, 252, 187, 233, 245, 242, 8.2, 266, 217, 261, 259, 248, 271, 272, 269, 265, 262, 260, 256, 251, 250, 240, 236, 219, 215

women and girls to safe emergency shelters and other services.

20. Enforce both existing and new laws to promote the rights of women and children.

21. Continue to implement additional measures to prevent discrimination against women and girls.