

ORAL STATEMENT: UPR (Pakistan)

Organisation: Jubilee Campaign

Speaker: Matthew Jones

Thank you Mr/Mm President.

Jubilee Campaign, together with Christian Solidarity Worldwide thank Pakistan for its commitment to the UPR process. However we have ongoing concerns regarding the economic, political and social marginalisation of non-Muslims and Muslim minorities in Pakistan.

Discrimination and misinformation about religious minorities in the national education curriculum and teaching practices is one of the root causes of the increasing prejudice felt in society, including the view that non-Muslims are not Pakistani citizens. An overhaul of key textbooks has long been recommended but progress varies between provinces.

Pakistan's blasphemy laws and anti-Ahmadiyya provisions are also key concerns. The blasphemy laws lack defined terms and ignore the question of intent. False accusations can be easily registered, as evidential requirements are inadequate. People of all faiths risk being accused, but allegations against minorities can result in attacks on their whole community.

The last three years have seen an increase in religiously-motivated violence, targeting both non-Muslims and minority Muslim groups. Perpetrators are rarely brought to justice, which means that minorities are often viewed as 'easy targets'. Ahmadis, Christians, Hindus, Shi'as, Sufis and Sikhs have all been badly affected, with Shi'a communities suffering by far the most casualties. Hate speech and the propagation of inflammatory messages is a standard precursor to religiously-motivated violence, but it is rarely punished in Pakistan, despite the fact that relevant legislation already exists. Even government officials inciting violence have not been held accountable for their actions.

Mr/Mm President. We urge Pakistan to ensure that children's textbooks throughout the country are non-discriminative and promote freedom of religion or belief. We also ask Pakistan to make greater efforts to protect vulnerable religious minorities, to ensure rule of law, and justice for those who suffer intimidation and violence. Finally, we call on Pakistan to take action to tackle hate speech and violence incited against religious minorities.

Thank you.