

Submission by Society for Threatened Peoples

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Pakistan

Deportation of Uyghur refugees to the People's Republic of China

1. The Pakistani authorities deported five Uyghurs to China on 8 August 2011 – accepting the fact, that the refugees might be imprisoned for years or even sentenced to death in the People's Republic. This was not only inhumane, but is also to be seen as a serious violation of human rights. Pakistani authorities flew out the Uyghurs – among them two children and a woman – to Urumqi, the capital of the Uyghur Autonomous Region after the government of the People's Republic of China had criticized Pakistani authorities for being too lenient toward Uyghur refugees.

Ahmadiyya-Muslims

2. The Muslem minority was declared by the authorities in 1974 as non-Muslem. Since then Ahmadi organizations and their publications have been consistently forbidden. Since the passing of the Anti-Ahmadiyya laws in 1984 members of this religious minority have been brought to court for blasphemy. Court cases at present pending against 90 Ahmadis in Pakistan on account of their religion. The authorities take no action against public calls to violence against Ahmadis by radical Sunni organizations. Attacks and murders against members of this community usually remain unrequited because the Pakistani courts do not dare to bring Muslim violent criminals to justice.

Ahmadis are neither allowed to preach in public nor are they allowed to go on pilgrimage to Saudi-Arabia. They have been forbidden since 1983 to hold public meetings. Although the constitution of Pakistan anchors the right to the freedom of religion their mosques are constantly being closed by the authorities.

At least 600,000 Ahmadis are said to live in Pakistan, though the actual number may well be much higher since most people refuse to provide details of their identity for fear of attacks. They are regarded by the Sunnis as a non-Moslem sect as they do not consider Mohammed to have been the only prophet.

Blasphemy Laws

3. Christians, Ahmadiyya-Muslims and civil rights activists in Pakistan have been calling for the abolition of the controversial blasphemy laws for a long time. Under the laws, insulting the Prophet Mohammed is a punishable offense. It is routinely invoked by members of the Muslim majority population to gain the upper hand in personal disputes. Christians, for example, quickly find themselves in deep difficulties if they are accused of blasphemy under this law. On November 7, 2010, the Christian Asia Bibi from Punjab province was sentenced to death for allegedly committing blasphemy. When the governor of the Punjab province, Salman Taseer who had spoken out in favor of Asia Bibi, was killed by one of his own bodyguards on January 4, 2011. On March 4, 2011, the minister for minorities, the Catholic Shahbaz Bhatti was murdered as well. He had fought for the release of Asia Bibi and the withdrawing of the blasphemy laws. In 2011 some 125 Christians were charged with blasphemy.

Situation in Pakistan's Balochistan Province

4. Balochistan contains Pakistan's most precious deposits of copper, gas iron ore and oil. However, it is the poorest province of the country. Yet Balochistan is the country's most impoverished province. Pakistan's security forces use great brutality in their fight against those in Balochistan who either struggle peacefully for their human rights or are part of rebel movements against the government. Between October 2010 and May 2011 alone at least 108 journalists, lawyers, teachers and other activists were presumably killed by security forces. There were repeated abductions of politically active people in Balochistan, most of them were later found dead. Torture, abductions and extrajudicial executions occurred on a regular basis.

Killings of Journalists

5. Religious extremists, local clan chiefs as well as the Pakistani Army and the secret service ISI use the threat of violence to intimidate journalists. Impunity reigns. Among the recent Pakistani victims was the investigative reporter Saleem Shahzad, who was murdered on May 30, 2011 after reporting on the infiltration in Pakistan's navy by the terrorist network Al-Qaida. The Human Rights organization Committee to Protect Journalists stated in April 2012 that since 1992 58 journalists were killed in Pakistan.

Conclusion

6. In conclusion Society for Threatened Peoples calls on the government of Pakistan to abolish the Anti-Blasphemy Laws and end impunity of human rights abuses against minorities, journalists and political activists.