

Factsheet: Persecution of minority Hindu, Sikh and Christian Women and Girls in the Islamic Republic of Pakistan



Hindu girls praying at a local temple in Rawalpindi, Pakistan | Image Credit: AP / B.K. Bangash

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Context

Crimes against religious minorities, particularly those committed against girls and women, persist unabatedly in the Islamic Republic of Pakistan with state support and impunity. Minority Hindu, Sikh, and Christian girls are regularly kidnapped, raped, forced to convert to Islam and wed off to their abductors. According to Pakistan's 2017 Universal Periodic Review, which was presented to the UN Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR)¹, on an average, 20 Hindu girls are kidnapped in Pakistan each month. Similarly as per Human Rights Commission of Pakistan's annual report, over 1,000 forceful conversions took place in the Sindh province of Pakistan in 2018.²

The Centre for Social Justice (CSJ) has conducted an investigation and collected data from 2013 to 2020 that shows 162 cases of forced conversion, of which 88 (54%) were forcefully converted Hindu girls, 72 (44%) Christians girls, and (2) 0.62 percent each Sikhs and Kalash girls. In terms of province, 84 instances (51.85 percent) were reported in the Punjab province, 71 cases (43.83 percent) in Sindh, 2 cases (1.23 percent) in the Federal and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa regions, and 1 case (0.62 percent) in Balochistan. Minor girls make more to over half of the converted victims. 75 (46.3%) girls under the age of 18, with 32.7% of them being between the ages of 11 and 15. Accurate age could not be recorded in 37% of the cases.³

For the purpose of this factsheet, select cases of Hindu, Muslim, and Sikh girls who experienced forced conversion and forced marriage in the Islamic Republic of Pakistan are included below as case studies.

¹ *The News International*. 2022. *Forced to marry*. [online] Available at: <<https://www.thenews.com.pk/amp/845401-forced-to-marry>> [Accessed 25 June 2022].

² *Smietana, B.*, 2022. *Forced conversions, marriages spike in Pakistan*. [online] *Religion News Service*. Available at: <<https://religionnews.com/2019/06/06/forced-conversions-marriages-spike-in-pakistan/>> [Accessed 25 June 2022].

³ <https://appgfreedomofreligionorbelief.org/media/APPG-Pakistan-Minorities-Report.pdf>
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Case Studies

1. Bahawalnagar Double Rape of Hindu Minor Girls | June 05, 2022

Two Hindu sisters, ages sixteen (16) and seventeen (17), residing in Bahawalnagar, Fort Abbas, which is around 300 kilometres from Lahore in Pakistan were kidnapped and raped by two local muslim men Umair Ashfaq and Kashif Ali at gunpoint while they were playing in the local fields. The local police officers refused to register a case against the two men as they belonged to the majority muslim community and came from influential families. On the contrary, the Police in fact threatened the minor victim's family in an effort to silence the victims. After much persuasion and protests, it was after three days that the Police filed a complaint. Subsequently, medical examination of the girls indicated that they had been sexually assaulted. According to area police official Irshad Yaqoob, Kashif Ali had obtained a pre-arrest bail from the court due to his family's influence while rapist Umair Ashfaq had been taken into custody.⁴

2. Liaquatpur, District Rahim Yar Khan Rape and Forced Conversion | May 25, 2022



Kajal, a 13-year-old minor Hindu girl, was abducted from her home in Tehsil Liaquatpur, District Rahim Yar Khan, Punjab province in Pakistan by a Muslim man named Ghulam Abbas while being held at gunpoint. She was brutally raped after being held captive for a prolonged period of time, and then she was made to convert to Islam. Ghulam Abbas, an Islamist, and his father Nazir Ahmed Masti Khail applied torture and sexual assault to convert her. She was then forcefully wed to her kidnapper. Kajal's mother and father, Balam Ram Roghat Ram Thory, pleaded with the Pakistani authorities to probe into the matter, but their appeals for justice fell on deaf ears.⁵

⁴ Two teenage Hindu sisters raped in Pakistan. (2022). Retrieved 24 June 2022, from <https://www.indiatoday.in/india/story/two-hindu-girls-raped-in-pakistan-punjab-province-1963405-2022-06-17>

⁵ 'Hindu Girl Kajal 13 Was R@Ped ,Forcibly Converted To Peaceful Religion And Married Off Pakistan' (Youtube.com, 2022) <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jzsZd5CD76s>> accessed 24 June 2022.

3. **Kumb, Khairpur District kidnapping and gang rape | March 14, 2022**



13 year old Bindiya Meghwar

A 13-year-old minor Hindu girl named Bindiya Meghwar was abducted on March 14, 2022, in Kumb, Khairpur District, Sindh province, in full view of her family as they were attending a temple nearby. Bindiya and her family were assaulted after they resisted the kidnapping by five radicalised Islamist men, Ijaz Pathan, Ijaz Ahmed, and their three companions. She was taken by car to one of Mirpur Mathelo's madrasas. There, she was brutally beaten, and gang raped by the men. The brutality did not stop there, the muslim men went on to film her while raping her and threatened that they would make her rape tape go viral if she retaliated. The little girl was then forcibly converted to Islam and married to Ijaz Ahmed, the man who had abducted her. She still has to deal with this abuse on a daily basis. Ijaz and his buddies often humiliate and sexually assault the girl, who was made to change her name to Fatima.⁶



Gang raped and forcefully converted and married Fatima (Bindiya Meghwar)

⁶ <https://hindupost.in/crime/minor-hindu-girl-bindiya-meghwar-abducted-in-in-sindh-pakistan/>

4. **Tando, Sindh abduction and missing minor Hindu Girl | March 17, 2021**



On March 17, 2021, a 13-year-old Hindu girl named Pooja Meghwar was abducted by unidentified men as she was making her way home from school in Tando, Hyderabad District, Sindh Province of Pakistan. She was solely responsible for providing for the family's needs. Pooja's father, Chetan Meghwar, who is a poor textile mill worker went to the police station to report his daughter missing. The police refused to take action. Pooja is still missing, and there are rumours that she has been kidnapped, forced to convert to Islam, and then forcefully wed to her abductor.⁷

5. **Kashmore Forced Conversion and marriage | March 08, 2021**

Kavita Bai, a 13-year-old minor Hindu girl, was kidnapped by five Islamist muslim men hailing from the Bahalkani tribe on March 8, 2021. Kavita's father stated that five armed muslims assaulted his daughter and then dragged her from their home, threw her into a white Jeep, set fire to their home, and sped away in the vehicle. Kavita was taken to the Tangwani Taluka in the Kashmore district of Sindh, where she was made to sit on the floor in front of the Barelvi imam. She received threats and was told to repeat after the imam. After being converted to Islam in front of more than 50 local muslim men, her name was changed to Um Hina, and she was ultimately married off to her captor.⁸



⁷ <https://nationworldnews.com/13-year-old-pooja-kidnapped-and-converted-to-islam-police-chased-father-for-filing-fir-fourth-incident-in-pak-in-a-month-and-a-half/>

⁸ <https://www.opindia.com/2021/03/pakistan-torched-house-of-kavita-oad-kidnapped-forcefully-converted-to-islam-sindh-2-arrested/>

6. **Golarachi Taluka Forced Conversion and marriage | January 01, 2021**



On January 1, 2021, a 35-year-old Islamist named Aman Allah abducted Hindu girl Najma Kohli from her hometown of Golarachi Taluka in the Sindh province's Badin district. Subsequently, Najma was forced to married to her captor, who is also her father's age, after being coercively converted. Despite the fact that Aman Allah is already married, her spouse

produced forged documents proving Najma's age to be 19 years old. Najma goes by the name of Fatima now and is a victim of repeat sexual and emotional assault.⁹

7. **Rajamari Abduction, forced conversion and marriage | August 06, 2020**



Muhammad Adil and his friends broke into Kavita Kohli's home on August 6, 2020. Kavita and her family were assaulted by the attackers, who kidnapped Kavita from the village of Rajamari in Punjgario, Badin Sindh. Himraj Kohli and Kavita are already wed. After brutally assaulting the entire family, the attackers threatened to rape and kill Kavita. Kavita's family reported the incident to the Pangrio police station, but the officers did nothing

to apprehend the kidnappers and refused to assist the family. The day after the kidnapping, already married Kavita was forcefully wed to her abductor Muhammad Adil who believes that there is no requirement for a divorce from a husband who is not a Muslim.¹⁰

8. **Panja Saheb, Punjab, Pakistan abduction and Conversion | August 31, 2020**

Bulbul Kaur, a 17-year-old Sikh girl who is the daughter of the Granthi (priest) of Gurdwara Panja Sahib Preetam Singh, was kidnapped by two Muslim men in Punjab after she went outside to dispose of some trash at 10 p.m. on August 31, 2020. The deputy commissioner of Attock in Pakistan received a complaint from her father, Pritam Singh. Bulbul called his father on September 12, 2020, and revealed that she was enrolled in a "madrassa." Then, Bulbul's father received a video in which she expresses her fear of being killed if she returns to her parents.

⁹ <https://english.newstracklive.com/news/pakistan-became-the-hell-of-hindus-hindu-girls-being-sold-like-sheep-and-goats-no-one-to-listen-to303-1217809-1.html>

¹⁰ <https://www.timesnownews.com/international/article/minor-hindu-girl-abducted-and-forcibly-converted-to-islam-in-pakistan-by-islamic-cleric-mian-mithoo-watch/591747>

9. **Jacobabad, Sindh Abduction and Conversion of a minor Sikh Girl | June 18, 2020**

A muslim man named Wazir Hussain abducted Resham Kaur, a 16-year-old teenage Sikh girl in Pakistan's Sindh province's Jacobabad area. Resham was married to Wazir Hussain after being forcibly converted to Islam at Dargah Amrut Shariff. Beesharan is her new name. Parents of Resham Kaur had filed a complaint against Hussain at Hussain's home village of Sohniपुर in Sindh's Zaffrabad district. Raids were carried out to apprehend Wazir Hussain, but he knocked on the court's doors asking for the case to be dropped, stating that his bride Resham Kaur turned Beesharan was not a minor and that she voluntarily converted to Islam to wed him. She was handed over to Hussain by the courts without much hesitation.¹¹

10. **Nankana Sahib abduction, forced conversion and marriage | August 27, 2019**

At gunpoint, two muslim men, Mohammad Hassan and his brother Imran Chisti kidnapped Jagjit Kaur, 19, a Sikh priest's daughter at Gurdwara Tambu Sahib, from Nankana Sahib in Punjab Province. Later, after being forcibly converted to Islam, Jagjit was forcefully wed to her kidnapper Mohammad Hassan. Jagjit was forced to change her name to Ayesha Bibi, which is now her new name. The police filed an enquiry on August 29, 2019, accusing six individuals of allegedly kidnapping Jagjit Kaur and forcing her to convert to Islam however, no concrete action had taken. In 2021, the girl was reunited with her family after a long struggle.¹²



¹¹ <https://www.sikh24.com/2020/06/24/pakistan-muslim-youth-marries-minor-sikh-girl-after-getting-her-converted-to-islam/>

¹² <https://www.timesnownews.com/international/article/pakistan-sikh-girl-conversion-case-fir-against-muslim-man-quashed/487045>

11. **Karachi Forced Conversion and Marriage | December 13, 2019**

Mehak Keswani, a 22-year-old Hindu woman, was kidnapped by Ahishar Memon from the Defence Housing Authority in Karachi, Pakistan, on December 13, 2019. Mehak was kidnapped and taken to the region of Ghotki, where she was tortured by the kidnapper and the local muslim Imam. She was beaten mercilessly and subjected to electric shocks before being forcefully converted to Islam. Amar Lal Keswani, Mehak's father, reported her daughter missing on December 13, 2019. A video footage of Mehak Keswani performing the Shahadah—the Islamic declaration of faith—and declaring her new Muslim name, Mehak Fatima, emerged a few days later. Mehak was seen in the video donning a hijab and appeared terrified and in danger. Fearing for her and her family’s life, Mehak was coerced to make these statements against her will.¹³



¹³ <https://www.timesnownews.com/international/article/mehak-keswani-becomes-mehak-fatima-22-year-old-pakistani-hindu-woman-abducted-converted/532603>

12. **Hala Abduction and forced marriage | December 01, 2019**

A Muslim guy named Shah Rukh Gul kidnapped a 24-year-old Hindu woman named Bharti Bai along with a number of other men at her wedding venue in Hala, Matiari district, Sindh, around 215 kilometres from the province's capital Karachi. Bharti was on her way to marrying a Hindu man when she was abducted. The Muslim men arrived and kidnapped according to Bharti's father, Kishore Das, Bharti was abducted in broad daylight while her daughter's wedding rituals were already underway. She was subsequently forced to convert to Islam, and her parents were handed a document of the conversion. In the documents, her new name after converting to Islam was recorded as Bushra. She was then forcefully married off to a Muslim man. The certificate of Bharti's conversion was provided by Jamiat-ul-Uloom Islamia in Karachi's Allama Muhammad Yousuf Banuri town; Mufti Abubakar Saeed ur Rehman saw and approved her conversion. The girl's family repeatedly begged government representatives to bring her daughter back, but because she is a member of the minority Hindu community, no one was sympathetic.¹⁴



¹⁴ <https://www.indiatoday.in/world/story/pakistan-hindu-woman-abducted-from-wedding-forcibly-converted-married-off-1640388-2020-01-27>

13. **Daharki town abduction and forceful marriage | March 2019**

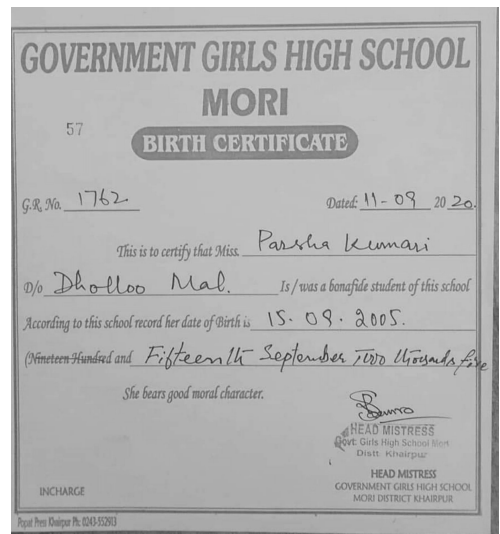
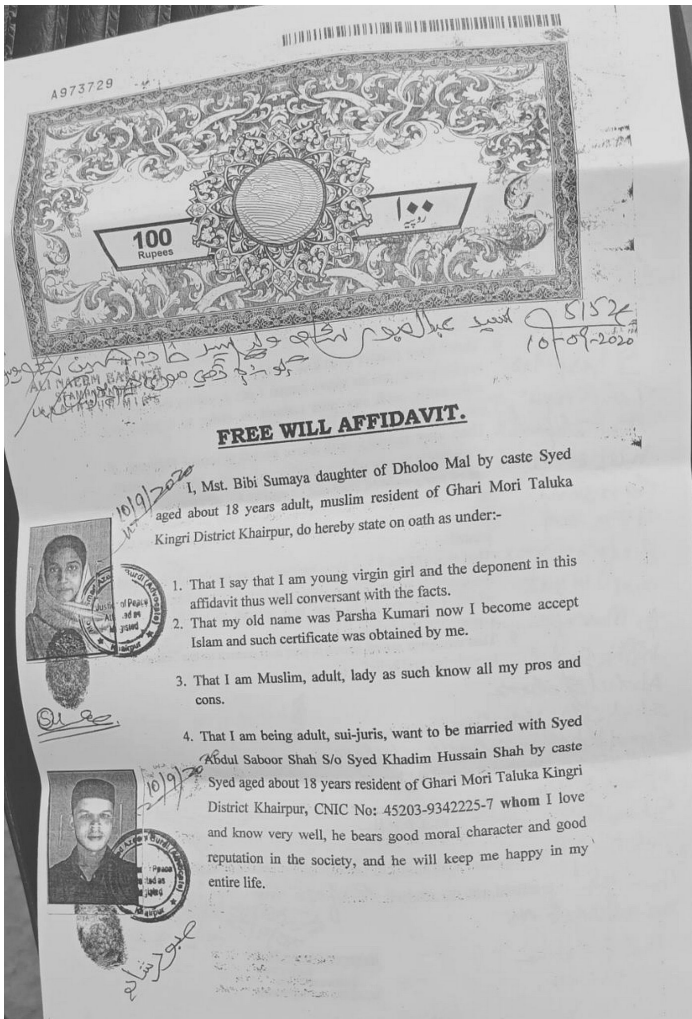
Reena (15) and Raveena (13), two young Hindu sisters, were kidnapped by muslim men named Barkat Ali and Safdar Ali in March 2019 in the Daharki town of the Ghotki district on the occasion of the auspicious Hindu festival Holi. Hari Lal, the father of Reena and Raveena, protested in front of the police station and begged the officers to look into the situation and learn more about his daughters. Safar Ali forced Raveena to convert, undergo torture, and change her name to Aasiya and forcibly married her. Safar Ali has been married before and has kids from a previous spouse. Similarly, Reena was subjected to torture by her kidnapper Barkat Ali; she was beaten, raped, and humiliated before being converted to Islam and given the new name Nadia. Barkat was previously married and Reena is now his second wife.¹⁵



¹⁵ <https://www.indiatimes.com/news/india/india-seeks-report-on-abduction-and-conversion-of-hindu-girls-in-pakistan-imran-orders-probe-364220.html>

14. **Mori District abduction and forceful conversion and marriage | September 12, 2022**

Parsha Kumari, a Hindu teenager, was abducted from the Mori district of Khairpur in Sindh. Parsha was kidnapped by Abdul Saboor, tortured, raped, forced to convert to Islam, and then forcibly married off to him. Abdul Saboor, Parsha's kidnapper, falsely stated that she was 18 years old on an affidavit, making it the legal age for marriage. However, according to documentation provided by the Parsha family, she was born on September 15, 2005, making her only 14 years old. She was a ninth-grade student. The abductor threatened Parsha's poor family as well, forcing them to flee the city. Parsha is forbidden from seeing her family members or leaving Abdul Saboor's house.¹⁶



¹⁶ <https://www.wionews.com/south-asia/pakistan-14-year-old-forcefully-converted-and-married-to-her-abductor-327201>

15. **Scheduled Caste Hindu teenager Shabana Kidnapping and Marriage | October 4, 2016**

On October 4, 2016, 15-year-old Scheduled Caste Hindu teenager Shabana was kidnapped from Nawabshah, Sindh. She was married to her abductor, Ali Gul, after being coerced into becoming a Muslim. When her father lodged a complaint against the kidnapper, Shabana came under pressure to request that the matter be dropped. When the family petitioned the Sindh High Court for justice, she was transferred to a shelter home, and the superintendent of the Karachi public hospital was tasked with determining the girl's age. The girl was between the ages of 15 and 16, the board reported. However, the girl was granted the right by the court to marry the man or woman of her choosing after reaching puberty, and such a marriage is recognised under Sharia Law¹⁷. She was then handed over to her abductor husband.¹⁸

16. **Faisalabad Christian girl kidnapping and rape | June 25, 2022**

A 12-year-old Christian girl named Farah was kidnapped from her Faisalabad home. On June 25, 2022, three Muslim males broke into Farah's home, abducted her, and forced her into the van while she was there with her grandfather, three brothers, and two sisters. When Farah's Father went to the closest police station to report the incident, the officers didn't show any interest in aiding him; instead, they refused to log the crime, verbally attacked him, and forced him outside the building. Three months after the incident, a First Information Report was filed by the local Police. Farah was taken to Hafizabad, 110 kilometres away from their home, during this period. She was forced to clean the house and take care of the animals in the yard while being raped and chained the most of the time. After Farah's father sought the aid of a nearby church in December, which set up legal assistance for the family, police intervened and apprehended the kidnapper. They had chained my ankles and bound me up with a rope, Sarah revealed. I made an attempt to cut the rope and release the chains, but I was unsuccessful. Every night I prayed, pleading with God to assist me.¹⁹

¹⁷ *TheNews.com.pk*. 2022. *Court declares 16-year-old converted girl's marriage valid*. [online] Available at: <<https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/93238-Court-declares-16-year-old-converted-girls-marriage-valid>> [Accessed 25 June 2022].

¹⁸ *WION*. 2022. *Pakistan: 14-year-old forcefully converted and married to her abductor*. [online] Available at: <<https://www.wionews.com/south-asia/pakistan-14-year-old-forcefully-converted-and-married-to-her-abductor-327201>> [Accessed 25 June 2022].

¹⁹

17. **13-year-old Christian girl converted and married to her abductor | May 20, 2021**

While employed by Saddam Hussain Hayat at a beauty salon in the Gujranwala Division of Punjab, 13-year-old Christian Girl Nayab Gill was kidnapped. Nayab, a ninth-grader, aspired to gain new skills and support her family because her father, who owns a small tailoring business from his home in Gujranwala, lost everything during the pandemic, including all of his savings. Saddam married Nayab as his fourth wife on May 20, 2021, after she was made to forcefully embraced Islam. On the marriage document, Nayab's age is listed as 19. However, her father, Shaid Masih Gill, brought the matter to the Lahore High Court, which ruled that both the conversion and the marriage were legal based on the fact that the girl's age was listed as 19 on documents. The court further noted that since Nayab converted first and subsequently got married, Sharia Law became applicable to her. According to Sharia, girls who have had their first period, like Nayab did, are allowed to marry at any age.²⁰

18. **Abduction and Conversion| October 13, 2020**

Ali Azhar kidnapped 13-year-old Christian girl Arzoo Raja forcibly from the street outside her home in Karachi Railway Colony, Sindh. Following her forced conversion to Islam, she was handed to her 44-year-old kidnapper Ali Azhar for marriage. Arzoo's marriage certificate lists her new name as Arzoo Fatima and her age as 18. In order to refute the allegations made in the paperwork requesting that Arzoo be released from the abductor's home, her parents filed a case in Sessions court Sindh.²¹

19. **Either convert or get killed | January 04, 2022**

Mahnoor Ashraf, a 14-year-old Pentecostal Christian girl, was kidnapped by her Muslim neighbour Muhammad Ali Khan Ghauri in the morning as she was heading to a store. Two of Muhammad Ali Khan Ghauri's children are the same age as Mahnoor, and he is 45 years old. The day following the kidnapping, Mahnoor's father Ashraf Masih Chaudry reported the incident. Mahnoor was forcefully converted to Islam and wed to Muhammad Ghauri on January 7, 2022, as per Muhammad's family. Although he was aware that she was a minor, the conversion and marriage were carried out by the local cleric Muhammad Ibrar. Despite the fact that her birth certificate indicates she was born on August 19, 2007, her age was falsified on the marriage and conversion certificate to 19 years old.²²

²⁰ <https://bitterwinter.org/pakistan-court-validates-conversion-marriage-of-13-year-old-christian-girl/>

²¹ http://www.fides.org/en/news/71368-ASIA_PAKISTAN_Christian_girl_kidnapped_and_convertted_reunites_with_her_family

²² <https://www.churchinchains.ie/news-by-country/south-asia/pakistan/pakistan-another-christian-girl-allegedly-abducted/>

Concluding Observations

Based upon the case studies above, it is undeniable that the minority community in Pakistan perpetually fears being attacked and persecution by Islamists in Pakistan. Moreover, women and young girl hailing from Hindu, Sikh and Christian girls remain prized targets of these Islamists. Islamic clerics play a major role in the persecution of minority girls as they play a crucial role in conversions; they endorse and practise forced conversions in mosques and madrassas. The conversion process is simple and usually involves repeating a basic conversion statement after a cleric when an abducted female is brought to a nearby mosque. The Arabic phrase reads, "La ilaha ill Allah, Muhammad Rasool Allah." Muhammad is God's Messenger, and God (Allah) is the only real (god). The girl's age is typically stated on the conversion certificate as simply "over 18." A Nikah could be performed there immediately after it. Some courts opt to apply Sharia Law to the victim's marriage status rather than State Law, even when the girl's age is contested in court. Moreover, Islamists routinely engage in kidnapping, rape, forced conversions, and forced marriages of minority women and girls with impunity in the Islamic Republic of Pakistan. The abusers enjoy a lax judicial system, social and moral acceptance from local imams, and financial support from powerful, wealthy political elites. Sharia Law is frequently used to support the perpetrators who forcefully marry underage girls.