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Questions

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RESPONSE

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Executive Summary

The twin cities of Rawalpindi and Islamabad form a conurbation across the Potwar plateau in northern Punjab. While Islamabad is the political capital of Pakistan, Rawalpindi has long been the headquarters of the Pakistan armed forces and is therefore considered to be politically important in its own right.

The international media have reported a number of security incidents in both Rawalpindi and Islamabad in recent years that have resulted in fatalities. While it appears that the majority of these incidents were aimed at political and military leaders, as well as police and military personnel, many of these incidents also claimed the lives of civilians. Furthermore, there have been a number of incidents in Rawalpindi which appear to have been specifically aimed at civilians. The International Crisis Group (ICG) suggested in a March 2009 report that the city of Rawalpindi has become a major base and transit point in Pakistan for such sectarian groups (International Crisis Group 2009, 'Pakistan: The militant Jihadi challenge', Asia Report N°164, 13 March, ICG website

http://www.crisisgroup.org/library/documents/asia/south_asia/164_pakistan_the_militant_jihadi_challenge.pdf – Accessed 16 March 2009 – Attachment 9).

According to a number of Pakistani media sources, Rawalpindi has experienced an increase in general crime in the twelve months to August 2009. These same sources also report an apparently common perception among the local citizenry that the police in Rawalpindi are ineffectual and corrupt. In a July 2008 report, the ICG makes the claim that the police are incapable of combating crime due to years of misuse and neglect (International Crisis Group 2008, 'Reforming Pakistan's police', Asia Report N°157, 14 July 2008, ICG website, pp.12-13 <http://www.crisisgroup.org/home/getfile.cfm?id=3516&tid=5570&type=pdf&l=1> – Accessed 15 July 2008 – Attachment 17).

In 2009 Pakistan remains classified as an under-developed economy and low-income state. Inflation in Pakistan during the 2008-2009 financial year was reportedly 21 percent per annum, with food stuffs particularly vulnerable to price rises. One of the areas in which Rawalpindi is reported to be particularly vulnerable is in the cost and availability of housing. Recent real estate reports suggest that Rawalpindi's housing costs are under pressure from both refugees resettling in the city following the recent conflicts in Swat and from government workers from nearby Islamabad seeking cheaper housing. While no specific information has been located on the standard of living of Christians in Rawalpindi, one potentially biased source suggests that the vast majority of Christians in Pakistan live "well below the poverty line" (Society of Biblical Christian Churches of Pakistan (undated), 'A Report from Islamic Republic of Pakistan', The Anglican Orthodox Church website http://www.anglicanorthodoxchurch.org/current_event/AOC_Web_Site%20pakistan.pdf – Accessed 13 August 2009 – Attachment 27).

Both local and international media sources have reported fatal attacks on Christians in various parts of Pakistan in recent years. The city of Rawalpindi has remained relatively immune from such incidents; however the Rawalpindi hinterland, including Islamabad, has witnessed attacks resulting in deaths such as recent attack at a church in Taxila (Fernandez, R. 2009, 'We condemn terrorist attack on Taxila Church. Salamaat Akhter', *Pakistan Christian Post* website, 9 August <http://www.pakistanchristianpost.com/viewnews.php?newsid=183> – Accessed 21 September 2009 – Attachment 32). The main body of reportage concerning the Rawalpindi Christian community catalogues other examples of alleged ill-treatment such as charges of blasphemy.

This response is organised as follows:

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- [Law & Order in Rawalpindi](#)
- [Livelihood Matters in Rawalpindi](#)
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General Security in Rawalpindi

While no major security incidents have been reported in the Rawalpindi suburbs of Mohallah Adra Cantt or Chamanzar Colony, the greater Rawalpindi metropolitan area has indeed witnessed a number of well-publicised security incidents that have claimed the lives of civilians in recent years.

Perhaps the most high profile security incident in Rawalpindi in recent years was the assassination of former Prime Minister, Benazir Bhutto on the 27th of December 2007. According to reports, the attack also killed at least 21 other people. For information on the context and circumstances of the attack, as well as the immediate aftermath *see* International Crisis Group 2008, 'After Bhutto's Murder: A Way Forward for Pakistan', Briefing N°74, 2 January, ICG website <http://www.crisisgroup.org/home/getfile.cfm?id=3262&tid=5246&l=1> – Accessed 3 January 2008 – Attachment 1.

In September 2008 it was widely reported that the then Pakistan Prime Minister, Yousuf Raza Gilani survived an assassination attempt on a road linking Rawalpindi with Islamabad. The report states that Prime Minister Gilani was not in the car or the convoy during the attack:

The Pakistani prime minister, Yousaf Raza Gilani, survived an assassination attempt today, officials said.

Shots were fired at Gilani's car in the capital, Islamabad, but he was not inside. It was going to the airport to collect him.

The prime minister's press secretary, Zahid Bashir, said unknown assailants fired "multiple sniper shots" in a "murder attempt".

Two bullets hit the front window on the driver's side of the black Mercedes limousine. "The driver reached Islamabad airport, but the prime minister and his staff were not travelling in the vehicles," said the interior minister, Kamal Shah (Wilkinson, I. 2008, 'Pakistan PM Yousuf Raza Gilani escapes assassination days before key elections', *The Telegraph* website, 3 September <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/asia/pakistan/2675147/Pakistan-PM-Yousuf-Raza-Gilani-escapes-assassination-days-before-key-elections.html> – Accessed 15 September 2009 – Attachment 2).

The Guardian reports similar details to *The Telegraph* report (Siddique, H. 2008, 'Pakistani PM Yousaf Raza Gilani survives assassination attempt', *The Guardian* website, 3 September <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2008/sep/03/pakistan> – Accessed 15 September 2009 – Attachment 3).

According to a *New York Times* report, in July 2009 a suicide bomber riding a motorcycle rammed a bus in Rawalpindi owned by the Kahuta Research Laboratories, described in the report as the main facility for uranium enrichment in Pakistan. The article also mentions a suicide bombing in Rawalpindi in November 2007 that also involved the use of a motorcycle as the bomb delivery device:

ISLAMABAD, Pakistan — At least one person was killed and 28 were injured Thursday in Rawalpindi when a suicide bomber riding a motorbike rammed into a government bus carrying workers from a nearby nuclear enrichment laboratory, government officials said.

...Rawalpindi is home to the headquarters of Pakistan's military. Installations of military and intelligence organizations there have been targets in the past.

Rawalpindi police officials said it was virtually impossible to check every vehicle and motorcycle entering the city.

...Lt. Gen. Talat Masood, a military and political analyst based in Islamabad, said the terrorists were now opting for high-profile but softer targets.

...Although police officials in Rawalpindi termed the attack involving a motorcycle as a new tactic, a similar attack was carried out two years ago.

On Nov. 1, 2007, a suicide attacker on a motorbike rammed into a Pakistan Air Force bus carrying officers and trainees near an Air Force base in Sargodha, in eastern Punjab Province.

In recent attacks, militants have used pickups and explosive-laden vehicles while singling out government and military installations (Masood, S. 2009, 'Bomber Strikes Government Bus in Pakistan', *New York Times* website, 2 July <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/07/03/world/asia/03pstan.html> – Accessed 3 September 2009 – Attachment 4).

The Pakistan newspaper the *PakTribune* reported on the 25th of February 2008 an incident in Rawalpindi in which a suicide bomber killed the Surgeon General of the Medical Corps and several other people in Rawalpindi:

RAWALPINDI: At least 8 people including a Surgeon General of Medical Corps Lieutenant Gen. Mushtaq Ahmed Baig were killed while 10 other were wounded in a suicide attack here in jurisdiction of RA Bazaar Police Station Rawalpindi.

...Surgeon General, Lieutenant General Mushtaq Ahmed Baig along with his driver and gunman embraced shahadat along with five civilians in the suicidal attack, ISPR confirmed ('Surgeon Gen among 8 dead in Rawalpindi suicide attack' 2008, *Pak Tribune* website, 25 February <http://www.paktribune.com/news/index.shtml?197750> – Accessed 4 September 2009 – Attachment 5).

In September 2007 two bombs were detonated in public market places in Rawalpindi within fifteen minutes of each other. According to the following *PakTribune* report, at least 24 people were killed in the blasts. While the first blast was aimed at military personnel, the second blast appears to have been specifically aimed at civilians given that there was no obvious military target and the bomb was placed in a bazaar:

RAWALPINDI: At least 24 people have been killed and 66 other injured in two consecutive bomb blasts in high security zone of Rawalpindi Cantonment areas, Director General Inter Service Public Relations (ISPR) Maj. Gen. Waheed Arshad said.

Army Spokesman said that the first bomb exploded in a bus-bearing no (ID-2395) at Qasim market, near Askari-XI area at 7:12 am killing at least 17 people and injuring 27 others.

The bus, he said, belonged to the defence ministry. The ill-fated bus was plying with officer of defence employees when the explosion took place damaging the bus completely, he maintained.

The second blast, DG ISPR said, occurred just after 15 minutes of first one, when a bomb rigged to a motorbike parked in RA Bazaar exploded with a fierce sound killing at least 7 people and injuring scores.

All the injured have been shifted to Combined Military Hospital (CMH), Rawalpindi General Hospital, Holy Family and Rawalpindi District Hospital. Army Spokesman Maj. Gen. Waheed Arshad said the investigation is underway to determine either it was suicide attack or remote control ('24 killed, 66 injured in twin bomb blasts in Rawalpindi' 2007, *PakTribune* website, 4 September <http://www.paktribune.com/news/index.shtml?188494> – Accessed 15 September 2009 – Attachment 6).

In August 2009 it was reported that Rawalpindi was placed on high security alert following a bomb blast at a police checkpoint. According to the *Xinhua* news agency, security has been tightened at major buildings and infrastructure throughout Rawalpindi and Islamabad:

After a blast occurred in Pakistan's Rawalpindi late Thursday night, the security has been put on high alert in the twin city of the Pakistani capital of Islamabad, the security officials said Friday.

At least six persons, including four policemen, were wounded in a bomb blast that occurred near a police check post on Misrial Road in Rawalpindi Thursday night, the official APP news agency reported.

According to the initial reports, an explosive laden car, parked near the police check post, exploded and injured several people including policemen. The wounded were shifted to a nearby hospital.

The traffic in the garrison city has returned to normal on Friday, but the security check has been tightened, a security control official in Rawalpindi told Xinhua in a telephone interview.

APP said the security in Rawalpindi has been put on high alert, with Pakistan Railways, Benazir Bhutto International Airport, bus stops, the sensitive buildings and installations are being watched ('Pakistan's Rawalpindi on high alert after blast' 2009, Global Times, source: *Xinhua*, 14 August <http://world.globaltimes.cn/asia-pacific/2009-08/460009.html> – Accessed 15 September 2009 – Attachment 7).

Given the timing, size and proximity to Rawalpindi it may be useful to also include information on the Marriott Hotel bombing in Islamabad on the 20th of September 2008. According to *Reuters* at least 53 people were killed in the blast, including the Czech Ambassador and other senior diplomatic staff. The report also states that Al Qaeda is suspected to be behind the suicide bombing:

ISLAMABAD (Reuters) – A suicide bomb attack that killed 53 people at the Marriott Hotel in Pakistan's capital bore the hallmarks of an operation by al Qaeda or an affiliate, Pakistani and U.S. intelligence officials said on Sunday.

...”The sophistication of the blast shows it's the work of al Qaeda,” a Pakistani intelligence officer told Reuters.

Four foreigners were killed including the Czech ambassador, his Vietnamese partner and two members of the U.S. armed forces assigned to the U.S. embassy. Denmark's security service said one of their staff, attached to the Danish mission in the capital, was missing, presumed dead (Cameron-Moore, S. et al 2008, 'Al Qaeda suspected of Pakistan's Marriott bombing', 21 September, *Reuters* <http://www.reuters.com/article/topNews/idUSLK18396120080921> – Accessed 8 September 2009 – Attachment 8).

Many of the recent assassinations, attempted assassinations and bombings in both Rawalpindi and Islamabad have been linked to so-called *jihadi* groups by non-government organisations and the media. The March 2009 International Crisis Group report *Pakistan: The militant Jihadi challenge* claims that Islamic militants have established a strong presence in both Islamabad and Rawalpindi. The report quotes an analyst who claims that Rawalpindi has become the hub of several sectarian groups and a major transit point for militants. The report also claims that the November 2007 attacks in Rawalpindi were retaliation for the military's attack on the Lal Masjid (Red Mosque) in July 2007:

Militants have made their presence increasingly felt in Islamabad from at least early 2006. An SSP rally in Islamabad on 7 April 2006 drew a reported 5,000 activists, despite the Musharraf government's ban on the group. At the rally, former Pakistani general Zaheerul Islam Abbasi, who had been arrested in 1995 for a coup attempt against Benazir Bhutto's government, declared, "The concept of nation state is an obstacle in the way of the establishment of Khilafat. We will start the establishment of Khilafat in Pakistan and then will do so across the world".

Organisers distributed literature, preaching jihad against Shias, and one organiser reportedly thanked the government for allowing the rally, which continued despite what former law minister and general secretary of the independent Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP) Iqbal Haider termed "the blatant violation of laws against inciting violence". Haider added, "It is obvious that there will be no end to extremism and hatred in society while official policies promote such things".

...In November 2007, two consecutive suicide attacks in Islamabad's twin city, Rawalpindi, including one just outside the army's general headquarters by jihadis – retaliation for the Lal Masjid operation– claimed over 30 lives.

... In September 2008, following an armed attack on Prime Minister Yusuf Raza Gilani's convoy along a heavily guarded route between Rawalpindi and Islamabad, **an analyst commented on "how freely [militant groups] have begun operating" in what is essentially the military high command's backyard.**

The Jaish-e-Mohammed and Harkatul Mujahidin have reportedly set up bases and transit camps in Rawalpindi for militants travelling from southern Punjab to NWFP. Said a Rawalpindi resident: "Most of the time ... Islamabad gets attention without a reference to the city of Rawalpindi. How can people ignore the influence of what is happening in Rawalpindi? The fact that Rawalpindi has turned into a hub of various sectarian groups needs to be analysed. If you walk around the city after Friday prayers, you will see their strength. They have established their presence in Rawalpindi. Their impact on Islamabad's security is key" (International Crisis Group 2009, 'Pakistan: The militant jihadi challenge', Asia Report N°164, 13 March, ICG website http://www.crisisgroup.org/library/documents/asia/south_asia/164_pakistan_the_militant_jihadi_challenge.pdf – Accessed 16 March 2009 – Attachment 9).

For more detail on the July 2007 events at Islamabad's Lal Masjid see RRT Research and Information 2008, *Research Response pak32888*, 30 January.

It may also be useful to include reports of two journalists murdered in Rawalpindi in the year to September 2009, as well as an attempt on a third. Although not directly related to general public safety, it has been suggested that the killings may represent an attempt to silence critics of jihadi movements in the press and therefore add to general insecurity.

Reporters Without Borders reports in the following press release that it is unlikely that the first killing on the 24th of January 2009 was a random attack, unconnected to the journalist's work:

On 24 January, Aamir Wakil, 40, a married man with four children, was murdered close to his home in Rawalpindi, near Islamabad. Today, an angry crowd ransacked the studios of Samaa TV in the southwestern city of Quetta.

...”We strongly condemn Wakil’s murder,” Reporters Without Borders said. “Although there is so far no evidence that it was linked to his work as a journalist, we call for the deployment of additional resources for the investigation and the prosecution of those responsible. Similarly, the authorities must consider new measures to protect privately-owned media after the attack on Samaa TV in Quetta” (‘Journalist gunned down in Rawalpindi, TV station attacked in Quetta’ 2008, UNHCR Refworld, source: *Reporters Without Borders*, 26 January <http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/4981786aa.html> – Accessed 3 September 2009 – Attachment 10).

In March 2009 journalist Raja Assad Hameed was shot and killed in Rawalpindi. The following media release from The Committee to Protect Journalists does not explicitly state that the killing was related to his work as a journalist:

...Hameed, who worked for local broadcaster Waqt TV and the English-language daily The Nation, and appeared regularly on Al-Jazeera broadcasts, was shot several times at close range outside his home at around 10 p.m., according to local and international news reports. The reports said a small group of armed men killed Hameed with a volley of gunshots when he opened his front door to answer the doorbell (‘Reporter shot and killed in Rawalpindi’ 2009, UNHCR Refworld, source: *Committee to Protect Journalists*, 27 March <http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/4a1d5d5c9.html> – Accessed 3 September 2009 – Attachment 11).

In February 2009 Reporters Without Borders reported that the brother of Aamir Wakil, Kamal Asfar, also had an attempt made on his life in Rawalpindi. Kamal Asfar is quoted in the following media release that the attack may be related to recent articles he has published on the so-called Pakistani Taliban:

Reporters Without Borders today urged the Pakistani authorities to act effectively to protect Kamal Asfar, journalist on the magazine Ash-Sharq (The East), who yesterday escaped a murder attempt. His brother, journalist, Aamir Wakil, was killed in Rawalpindi on 24 January 2009. “I am lucky to be alive today”, Asfar told the worldwide press freedom organisation. Two bearded men had fired several shots at his car near Kundyali in the Kohat district on Sunday, he said. “I was returning to Rawalpindi when a white car overtook us and tried to make us pull up. Two armed men turned towards us and opened fire. They first time they fired I didn’t stop. Then they shot again shattering the windscreen. I lost control of the vehicle and we left the road. Luckily we got out safely”, Asfar said, adding that he had reported the attack to police in Ghumbat, Kohat district. **Asfar said he thought the attack may have been motivated by articles he wrote recently about the Pakistani Taliban in Ash-Sharq. He had also reported on religious parties, Kashmir and the situation in Afghanistan, he said.** Police have made no arrests in connection with the murder of his brother Wakil (see the release) but Asfar said he had given two names of suspects – both hired killers – to the Pakistan Federal Union of Journalists (PFUJ) which they had passed on to the interior ministry (‘Brother of murdered journalist escapes attempt on his own life’ 2009, UNHCR Refworld, source: *Reporters Without Borders*, 2 February <http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/498ab62f1c.html> – Accessed 3 September 2009 – Attachment 12).

The apparent ease with which Jihadi militants operate in Rawalpindi and Islamabad is partly due to an intimidated judiciary and police according to an April 2005 report by the International Crisis Group entitled ‘The State of Sectarianism in Pakistan’. The report states that both police and judges have been targeted by Islamic militants. Furthermore, the report states that the lower ranks of the police have become infiltrated by Islamic militants:

Judges have become the target of terrorist threats and are, therefore, hesitant to hear cases involving religious militants. In anti-terrorism courts, judges presiding over cases of sectarian militancy are often forced to hold trials in jails. The police, too, have proved ineffective, and their inaction is not for lack of information. In the Punjab, for instance, the police maintain updated lists of Shia and Sunni sectarian activists, most of whom have criminal records. Yet law enforcement agencies mainly keep watch on these terrorists, pursuing cases usually only after a high profile terrorist attack forces them to act.

This passivity can be partly attributed to fear of sectarian retaliation. **Terrorists have killed many police officers investigating sectarian killings in Punjab and Karachi. In 2002 police inspector Mohammad Jamil of Jhang's elite police force was killed after arresting several LJ activists. In July 2004, a Rawalpindi police inspector was assassinated on his way to court to give evidence in the hearing on an anti-Shia sectarian attack.**

The rising graph of sectarian violence is also linked to police inability to pre-empt and investigate sectarian crimes. The Sialkot suicide bombing at a Shia mosque in October 2004 illustrates the limitations. A day after the attack, officers asked mosque leaders to hire private security firms for protection. "There is not enough force to protect all potential targets", a senior official said. It is doubtful if police security would have helped. The police guard at the mosque's gate had failed to search the Sialkot suicide bomber. Police bodyguards have failed to prevent other ambushes and attacks, and have, at times, themselves become victims of sectarian terror, as in the January 2005 murder of a sectarian Sunni leader, Haroon Qasmi.

Weak prosecution cases filed by the police often fail to hold in court. This inability of the police to curb sectarian terror effectively underscores the need for urgent measures to enhance the force's organisational, technical and human capacities. As a starting point, the police should be free of political interference and organised and trained along modern professional lines. An officer says, "What we need are more resources, better training and modernisation".

The penetration of the law enforcement agencies by terrorist organisations is particularly troubling. **The terrorist responsible for the attack on the Shia Hyderi Masjid in Karachi in May 2004 that killed eighteen turned out to be a police constable who was a member of the banned Sipah Sahaba. At least two policemen are said to have been among the terrorists responsible for the attack on a Shia procession in Quetta in March 2004, which killed 45.** An al Qaeda suspect was detected among the bodyguards of the Punjab chief minister and removed from duty. He, too, was a member of the Sipah Sahaba. Investigation into these cases has resulted in a verification process of low-ranking police personnel by intelligence agencies but this is as yet restricted to Punjab (International Crisis Group 2005, 'The State of Sectarianism in Pakistan', Asia Report N°95, 18 April, pp23-24 – Attachment 13).

Law & Order in Rawalpindi

A number of newspapers in Pakistan in 2009 have reported that Rawalpindi has experienced an increase in general crime in the city in recent years. The following article in *Dawn* on the 8th of September 2009 states that burglaries and attempted-murder rates have climbed in Rawalpindi in the year to September. *Dawn* reports that some 11,350 cases have been reported to police in the city in the first eight months of 2009, that 'gangs of youngsters' are responsible for many of the crimes, and that police have yet to make a single arrest:

With all the talk about revamping the police force, the citizens of Rawalpindi were expecting the crime graph to go down. But the latest figures have dashed all such hopes. The first eight months of this year marked by murders, kidnappings, rapes, burglaries and vehicle thefts.

Gangs of youngsters were active during this period, snatching purses from women and holding couples at gunpoint in the city markets.

People, especially women, are worried about the increasing incidences of purse snatching. They say there seems to be no end to the purse snatching incidents as the police have not yet caught any culprit involved in the crime.

Citizens criticize the police for their indifferent attitude in curbing the crime, especially the burglary and vehicle theft which are happening almost everyday in the city. A terror-stricken resident said: 'Every time my son leaves the house, I pray to God that he comes back alive.'

According to statistics for the period of January to August 2009 the Rawalpindi district police reported 11,350 cases as compared to 9,520 such cases registered during the same period in 2008. The police attribute the increase in the number of such cases to the policy of free registration of case.

According to the statistics 198 cases of murder and 249 attempted murder were reported to the police during the last eight months compared to 192 murder and 254 attempted murder cases in the corresponding period last year (Asghar, M. 2009, 'No let-up in rising crime rate in Rawalpindi', *Dawn* website, 8 September <http://www.dawn.com/wps/wcm/connect/dawn-content-library/dawn/news/pakistan/metropolitan/04-no-let-up-rising-crime-rawalpindi-qs-07> – Accessed 15 September 2009 – Attachment 14).

Pakistan's *The Daily Times* has also reported that Rawalpindi residents have a poor opinion of the local police's ability to solve major crimes:

RAWALPINDI: The city police have not only failed to ensure security to general public but also to investigate terrorism, target killing, robbery, burglary, muggings and vehicle theft cases and bring the culprits to justice.

The residents have expressed concern over rising crime rate and poor performance of police, whereas Regional Police Officer (RPO) Aslam Tareen and City Police Officer (CPO) Rao Muhammad Iqbal are least concerned about this situation.

Terrorism cases: From January to September this year two suicide bomb blasts occurred in the limits of Westridge Police Station. On July 3 a suicide bomber rammed his bomb-laden motorbike into a government bus on Peshawar Road. More than 33 persons were injured in the blast. The police formed Joint Investigation Team (JIT) to probe the case but the case is still untraced.

...The residents while talking to Daily Times appealed to the Punjab Chief Minister to take notice of the situation ('Rawalpindi police fail to solve major crime cases' 2009, *The Daily Times* website, 7 September http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/default.asp?page=2009%5C09%5C07%5Cstory_7-9-2009_pg11_8 – Accessed 15 September 2009 – Attachment 15).

The Nation reported in June 2008 that accusations of both malpractice and corruption have been levelled at the Rawalpindi constabulary:

RAWALPINDI – The law and order situation position in the district has been deteriorating for the last few years as different incidents of crimes including, robberies, purse snatching, vehicle lifting and theft have been increased considerably.

This was observed in a meeting held under the chair of new Regional Police Officer (RPO) Nasir Khan Durrani at Regional Police Headquarter here on Monday.

CPO Rao Muhammad Iqbal Khan, SSP Operation Farooq Yaseen and all SSPs along with SDPOs of Rawalpindi also attended the meeting.

It was further observed by the RPO that there were complaints of corruption and malpractices of the officers (Rao, S. 2008, 'Crime rate increases in Rawalpindi', *The Nation* website, 17 June <http://www.nation.com.pk/pakistan-news-newspaper-daily-english-online/Regional/Islamabad/17-Jun-2008/Crime-rate-increases-in-Rawalpindi> – Accessed 15 September 2009 – Attachment 16).

A July 2008 report by the International Crisis Group entitled 'Reforming Pakistan's police' states that the misuse of Pakistan's police by successive governments, both military and civilian, has left the police systemically corrupt and incapable of tackling crime. The report argues that historically Pakistan's police have been employed as a political militia, used to intimidate the government of the day's political opponents, rather than as an investigative body and an apolitical enforcer of law and order:

After decades of misuse and neglect, Pakistan's police force is incapable of combating crime, upholding the law or protecting citizens and the state against militant violence. With an elected government taking over power after more than eight years of military rule, the importance of reforming this dysfunctional force has assumed new importance. Elected representatives will be held accountable if citizens continue to see the police, the public face of government, as brutal and corrupt.

The report goes on to say:

The public is certainly justified in perceiving the police as brutal and corrupt. Since 2002, after the order came into being, the independent Human Rights Commission of Pakistan's annual reports have highlighted widespread and increasing instances of illegal detentions, deaths in custody, police torture, extrajudicial killings and pervasive corruption.

... Transparency International's "Global Corruption Barometer 2007" called the police the most corrupt public sector agency in Pakistan.

In 2002, the military government formed a three member committee, headed by an additional secretary of the interior ministry, to find ways of tackling police corruption. It was given a list of 4,000 officers suspected of corrupt practices but no action was taken. In 2006, the Punjab government's "Anti-Corruption Establishment" report warned that police corruption was "very high", ranging from bribes to registering false cases and dropping charges against criminals. This warning, however, was not accompanied by remedial action.

Police officers agree that there is widespread corruption, from petty bribery at the lower rungs of the hierarchy to more substantial graft at the top. In an attempt to justify their force's shortcomings, they blame the government for failing to take action and also for not addressing its own shortcomings. "How can corruption in the police go down when people known to be corrupt are made its bosses?" asked an officer. "Many in the police, particularly those at the bottom of the pile, feel that when those at the top are making money right, left and centre, what incentive is there for them to remain clean?" This is certainly no justification, but those at the top of the police hierarchy must understand that police professionalism and efficiency and the force's public image are badly tarnished by such practices (International Crisis Group 2008, 'Reforming Pakistan's police', Asia Report N°157, 14 July 2008, ICG website, pp.12-13 <http://www.crisisgroup.org/home/getfile.cfm?id=3516&tid=5570&type=pdf&l=1> – Accessed 15 July 2008 – Attachment 17).

Livelihood Matters in Rawalpindi

No information has been located that specifically examines average incomes of Christians in Rawalpindi. However, sources have been located that suggest that the vast majority of Christians in Pakistan endure low standards of living.

A comparative study of the cost of living across a range of locations in Pakistan was presented at the Annual General Meeting and Conference of the Pakistan Society of Development Economists on 2 April 2009 by two economists of Lahore's Beaconhouse National University. Data pertaining to Rawalpindi, along with data for Pakistan's national and provincial centres, is reproduced below sourced from Table 1 on page 6 of the study. The study employed: "the latest (March-April 2008) prices of 133 commodities from the Monthly Bulletin of Statistics of the Federal Bureau of Statistics for 32 cities/towns of Pakistan".

Table 1: Cost Of Living Index by City* (National Average = 100).

<i>City</i>	<i>Food/Beverages</i>	<i>Wheat</i>	<i>Non-Food</i>	<i>Overall</i>
Islamabad	110.59	99.00	105.01	106.63
Lahore	99.59	99.70	100.24	99.52
Rawalpindi	104.26	97.95	100.27	101.51
Karachi	103.72	103.02	95.63	99.32
Peshawar	102.52	111.17	100.15	101.08
Quetta	107.41	114.46	112.54	111.27

(Ahmad, S. & Gulzar, A. 2009, 'Inter-City Variation in Prices', Pakistan Institute of Development Economics website, p.6 <http://www.pide.org.pk/PSDE/pdf/29.pdf> – Accessed 8 September 2009 – Attachment 18).

A November 2002 paper provides an extensive comparative study of the cost of living across a number of Pakistan's cities. The situation in Rawalpindi, compared to other parts of Pakistan, is displayed in Table 1 on page 6 of the report. More generally the report finds as follows:

Table 1 gives estimates of the overall costs of living index for each city and for each major consumption category like food and beverages, apparel and footwear, fuel and lighting, rent and others. For all commodities / services combined, the most expensive city of Pakistan is Karachi, the largest metropolis. The cheapest location is Jhang, a relatively small town located in the South of Punjab. The difference in the cost of living index between these two urban centres is about 15 per cent. Generally, appears to be a positive correlation between the city size and cost of living. There are, however, significant exceptions. Lahore appears to be a relatively cheap city. Despite being the second largest metropolis. It has a cost of living index four per cent below the national average. As opposed to this, Islamabad, a relatively small city serving as the national capital, has a cost of living index two per cent above the national average (Pasha, H.A. & Pasha, A.G. 2002, 'Cost of Living Index by City of Pakistan', November, Social Policy and Development Centre Pakistan website, pp.6-7 <http://www.spdc-pak.com/pubs/rr/rr43.pdf> – Accessed 8 September 2009 – Attachment 19).

A 2006 study comments on the manner in which Rawalpindi, compared to Islamabad, has “received much less resources and developed very low level of service standards”. Referencing a 1995 study the 2006 paper also notes that: “Rawalpindi had continuously absorbing huge overspill of low income government servant which could not accommodate in Islamabad or could not bear the cost of living in Islamabad”(sic):

Moreover, Islamabad absorbed the lion’s share of resources for development; even higher than the average spend on other cities. **On the other hand, Rawalpindi received much less resources and developed very low level of service standards. Moreover, Rawalpindi had continuously absorbing huge overspill of low income government servant which could not accommodate in Islamabad or could not bear the cost of living in Islamabad** (Botka 1995). Rawalpindi needed at least the same level of financial resources and professional staff as provided to Islamabad. However, it seems very difficult to provide these resources to Rawalpindi in existing institutional arrangements (Maria, S.I. & Imran, M. 2006, ‘Planning of Islamabad and Rawalpindi: What Went Wrong?’ ISoCaRP website, p.9 http://www.isocarp.net/Data/case_studies/720.pdf – Accessed 8 September 2009 – Attachment 20).

The Voice of Pakistan blog-site reproduces an article from *The News* which relates that the recent increases in the cost of living across Pakistan have affected Islamabad more substantially than Rawalpindi: “According to FBS most recent statistics, the average price of mutton is Rs 255 per kilogram in Islamabad whereas in Rawalpindi it is reduced a little bit and sold for Rs 243.33 per kg”. The report follows:

ISLAMABAD: The cost of living in the federal capital is far higher than other cities of Pakistan as the Sensitive Price Index (SPI) is causing unbearable burden on the low-income groups, according to the latest statistics obtained by The News from the Federal Bureau of Statistics (FBS). The low-income groups are prime victim of rise in the food inflation. Most of their income is used for purchasing the essential food items, the prices of which are too much for people surviving on a fixed income. According to FBS most recent statistics, the average price of mutton is Rs 255 per kilogram in Islamabad whereas in Rawalpindi it is reduced a little bit and sold for Rs 243.33 per kg. In Gujranwala mutton is sold for Rs 245, Sialkot Rs 250, Lahore Rs 248, Faisalabad Rs 220, Sargodha Rs 220, Multan Rs 225, Karachi Rs 242.31, Hyderabad Rs 220, Sukkur Rs 200, Larkana Rs 200 and in Peshawar Rs 210 per kg (Qaisar, M. 2007, ‘Islamabad tops country in cost of living’, *Voice of Pakistan* website, 13 February <http://mqaisar.blogspot.com/2007/02/islamabad-tops-country-in-cost-of.html> – Accessed 16 September 2009 – Attachment 21).

More generally, rising inflation and an increase in the cost of living has been reported of Pakistan more generally in the recent financial year. In August 2009 *The Pakistan Observer* reports that the CPI in Pakistan reached 21 percent in the 2008-2009 financial year. It also claims that the price of many food stuffs rose dramatically on the eve of the 2009 Ramadan:

According to media reports the prices of sugar, rice, vegetables and other elementary food stuff have gone up by 20-25% in the recent days. That is happening just before the advent of the holy month of Ramadan. People in Pakistan fear a price hike during the days and weeks to come. In fact, volatile prices of necessary goods and services have been enervating the economy of the country for decades with the exception of very few short-lived periods of relief. Nevertheless, the present outcry of the people over substantial upsurge in the prices of rudimentary food stuff and other necessities of life is a strong message to the government that it either lacks an inflation control policy or indeed the policy is toothless and not working properly. **Undoubtedly this perpetual inflationary pressure has not only stricken the poorest low-income groups hard but also has ravaged broader fixed-income sections of the society.**

...Since 2002-03 a callous inflationary pressure has held the society in its vicious grip. From July 2008 to July 2009, CPI and SPI increased by 21% which must be an absolutely unacceptable rate of inflation in most economies of the world (Hussain, I. 2009, 'The Peril of Price Hike', *Pakistan Observer* website, 16 August <http://pakobserver.net/200908/16/Articles04.asp> – Accessed 8 September 2009 – Attachment 22).

On 6 April 2009 a columnist in *The News* complained as follows:

Today a bag of 20-kilogram wheat flour is selling up to Rs480/500 against yesterday's Rs420/430, tomato has gone up from Rs30 to Rs40/45 per kilogram, banana from Rs30 to Rs40 per dozen and guava from Rs35 to Rs50 per kilogram. Lady-finger could not be had at less than Rs80/100. Chicken is still dearer at Rs106 in Rawalpindi and Rs110/115 in Islamabad and mutton at Rs300/320 per kilogram. The lower middle class can't think of buying fish and mutton now. Last year, chicken sold at Rs55/65 and mutton at Rs180/200, and people of the twin cities protested against lethargy of the administration (Sarwar, Z.A. 2009, 'Lessons not yet learnt', *The News* website, 6 April http://www.thenews.com.pk/daily_detail.asp?id=171080 – Accessed 8 September 2009 – Attachment 23).

A 2008 United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) report places Pakistan relatively low on the human development index:

With a human development index (HDI) of 0.551 in 2007, Pakistan ranks 136th out of 177 countries, according to the Human Development Report 2007. Pakistan's human development indicators have generally improved, they still lag behind other countries in the region. **The recent economic growth has increased disparities between regions and rural-urban areas, particularly in recent years.** The country has a combined literacy rate of 49.9% and the percentage of people living below Poverty Line i.e. Rs. 944.47 (USD \$16 approx) per adult equivalent per month is 22.32 % ('About Pakistan' 2008, United Nations Development Programme website, source: *UNDP Situation Analysis Pakistan 2008* http://www.undp.org.pk/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=803 – Accessed 8 September 2009 – Attachment 24).

Echoing the 2006 Maria and Imran report quoted earlier, the Pakistan newspaper *The News* claims that government workers from Islamabad are moving to Rawalpindi in search of cheaper rents, adding pressure on Rawalpindi's housing market (Attachment 25). It has also been recently reported that Rawalpindi is experiencing a housing shortage as a consequence of the arrival of persons displaced from the North Western Frontier Province by fighting in restive areas like the Swat District (Attachment 26).

A recent MRT Research and Information Response PAK35299 briefly examined the standards of living of Christians in Pakistan compared to the general population. One undated source employed in that response was produced by the Society of Biblical Christian Churches of Pakistan and lacks both objectivity and statistical citations. The source states that Pakistan's urban Christians tend to live in slums, 'well below the poverty line' and experience discrimination by the majority Sunni population:

Islamic Republic of Pakistan, a country with 165 Million population has nearly 2 percent Christians **out of which more than 95% Christians live either in slums in main cities or in villages.** These Christian are living in extremely difficult situation. **This 95% Christian Community lives well below the line of poverty. Average income of a family is around Rupees 3,000.00 or 30.25 Dollars.** They are deprived and discriminated by Muslim majority in almost all fields of life. People in cities are mostly "Sanitary workers", factory workers,

common labourers who work on daily wages and women who are also sanitary workers and works as “maid servants” for cleaning jobs in the house of well to do people. **Their children don’t get any chance to go to school as they often start working by the time they reach the age of 10 for the reason that their parents can not afford to send them to schools.** The medical help is almost out of their reach (Society of Biblical Christian Churches of Pakistan (undated), ‘A Report from Islamic Republic of Pakistan’, The Anglican Orthodox Church website

http://www.anglicanorthodoxchurch.org/current_event/AOC_Web_Site%20pakistan.pdf – Accessed 13 August 2009 – Attachment 27).

The following July 2008 report was written by Shaun Gregory, a Professor of International Security in the Department of Peace Studies at the University of Bradford and would appear to be more objective in its analysis. Professor Gregory does not argue that Christians are economically any worse off than the majority of Pakistanis. Rather, Professor Gregory argues that a combination of extreme poverty, violence and discrimination means that Pakistan’s Christians face greater overall hardship:

...it is important to keep in mind that the Christian experience in Pakistan is diverse. Amongst Christian members of Pakistan’s politico-military elite and urban middle-class that experience may well be relatively benign but what most concerns us here is the experience of the overwhelming majority of Christians in Pakistan who are rural and urban poor. An important embedded point is whether the situation of Pakistan’s Christians is any worse than that of the Muslim rural and urban poor in Pakistan. **The latter experience poverty, poor education, political corruption, insecurity, powerlessness, bondage, state repression, intimidation and sometimes violence as part of their expected pattern of life. The argument here is that the situation of Christians [and other minorities] is worse because in addition to facing all the problems which flow from being poor and powerless in Pakistan, Christians [and other minorities] face additional difficulties and insecurities which arise specifically from their minority status. It is these latter difficulties that have to be addressed before Christians can be fully part of wider efforts to improve the overall conditions of Pakistan’s rural and urban poor.**

The second historical strand informing the status of Christians in Pakistan is that which arises from the caste structure, widespread across the Indian subcontinent. Many, and according to some sources the majority of, contemporary Pakistani Christians are the descendents of “untouchables” who during the era of colonial rule converted *en masse* to Christianity in the hope of securing a better dispensation from their colonial rulers. For many Pakistani Muslims as a result, contemporary Christians carry the stigma of the lowest caste inferiority, which may in turn reinforce prejudices which arise from the resonance of *dhimmitude* (Gregory, S. 2008, ‘The Christian Minority in Pakistan: Issues and Options’, Pakistan Security Research Unit (PSRU), University of Bradford website, 17 July <http://spaces.brad.ac.uk:8080/report/attachments/748/brief+37.pdf> – Accessed 13 August 2009 – Attachment 28).

In September 2009 the non-secular Pakistani newspaper *Dawn* published an article entitled ‘Under the bare sky’ about a particular Christian slum in Rawalpindi. The article and accompanying photo indicate that the encampment runs the length of a stretch of highway in Rawalpindi. While the article does not state that most Christians live in slums, it does quote a former minister of minorities who argues that ‘99 percent of cases against Christians stem from property issues’:

Their makeshift houses quiver as cars zoom by on both sides of the green strip island where they now live. There are hundreds of poor Christian families – men, women and children, living day and night for four months under flimsy sheds and covers on the island between two roads in G-7. Right till the end of the undulating road as far as I can see, the green island is lined with tattered tents which looks like a long mutated caterpillar.

...Hector Haleem, now in jail, had taken money from more than 3,000 poor Christian community members for providing them land at the Rawal Lake side. The Water and Sanitation Agency of Rawalpindi claims that the land belongs to the civic agency and the Christian community members have occupied it illegally.

...Minorities have not entirely been integrated in the society because of the brutal exclusive attitude towards their basic needs. Former law minister and current head of HRCP also says that 99 per cent cases against minorities stem from property issues.

The former government had announced to regularize all *katchi abadis* and give property rights to minorities who have been living in slum areas for generations but the announcements have proved to be mere lip service (Abbas, N. 2009, 'Under the bare sky', *Dawn* website, 5 September <http://www.dawn.com/wps/wcm/connect/dawn-content-library/dawn/the-newspaper/columnists/06-under-the-bare-sky-rs-01> – Accessed 21 September 2009 – Attachment 29).

III-Treatment of Christians in Rawalpindi

Pakistan is home to approximately 2 million Christians of various denominations, of which 80 percent reportedly live in the province of Punjab. This community has a number of its own newspapers which publish on the internet, including the *Pakistan Christian Post* and *Christian News Today*. The international media has published a number of reports of fatal attacks on individual Christians and Christian communities in Pakistan in the past decade. Perhaps unsurprising, the local Christian media report greater number of incidents of alleged ill-treatment of Christians.

Rawalpindi's Christian community has thus far remained relatively immune to the large-scale and fatal attacks that have occurred elsewhere in Pakistan in recent years. More specifically, no sources have been located that indicate that threats or actual attacks have been perpetrated against the Emmanuel Church in the Rawalpindi suburb of Chamanzar Colony.

The most recent high profile incident reported in the international media to involve Rawalpindi was the murder in August 2007 of the Baptist bishop of Rawalpindi and his wife Kathleen in their home in Islamabad (Hasan, S.S. 2007 'Bishop killed in attack', *BBC NEWS* website, 30 August http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/6971054.stm – Accessed 16 September – Attachment 30).

In 2002 Islamabad paid witness to a grenade attack on a church in which several people were killed, including the wife of a US diplomat. For more information on this attack *see* 'Five die in Islamabad church attack: US diplomat's wife, daughter among victims; 41 hurt' 2002, *Dawn* website, 18 March <http://www.dawn.com/2002/03/18/top1.htm> – Accessed 8 September 2009 – Attachment 31.

Further afield, in the Rawalpindi hinterland, a number of high profile attacks on Christians and Christian property have been reported. In August 2009 a grenade attack was conducted on a church in Taxila, 30 kilometres from Rawalpindi, killing 4 according to the *Pakistan Christian Post* (Fernandez, R. 2009, 'We condemn terrorist attack on Taxila Church. Salamaat Akhter', *Pakistan Christian Post* website, 9 August <http://www.pakistanchristianpost.com/viewnews.php?newsid=183> – Accessed 21 September 2009 – Attachment 32).

In September 2002 another grenade attack was carried out at a Christian school in the town of Murree, in the hills to the north of the Rawalpindi – Islamabad conurbation (see 'Gunmen attack Pakistan School', 2002, *BBC News* website, 5 August http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/2173184.stm – Accessed 8 September 2009 – Attachment 33).

There have been a number of incidents throughout Pakistan that have resulted in the deaths of Christians. The most recent incident at the time of writing was the August 2009 attack on the Punjab town of Gojra that left several Christians dead and hundreds of Christian homes destroyed. Several sources state that the events were sparked by an allegation of blasphemy by a Christian at a wedding in the town. For more information on the events at Gojra see: DIAC 2009, 'CX231418: PAKISTAN: Violence against Christians, Australia', CISNET, source: Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 5 August, 2009 – Attachment 34; Partlow, J. 2009 'They Want to Destroy Christians', *The Washington Post* website, 3 August <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/08/02/AR2009080202011.html> – Accessed 3 September 2009 – Attachment 35; 'Church dissatisfied over slow prosecution of rioters' 2009, *Testimoni* website, 2 September <http://www.testimoni.org/2009/09/02/church-dissatisfied-over-slow-prosecution-of-rioters/> – Accessed 4 September 2009 – Attachment 36; Waraich, O. 2009 'Who's Attacking the Christians?', *Time Magazine* website, 5 August, <http://www.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,1914750,00.html> – Attachment 37; Channon, J. 2009, 'Persecution of Christians in an Islamic State: 7 Christians burnt alive in Gorja', The Order of Preachers website, 4 August http://curia.op.org/en/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=352:persecutions-of-christians-in-an-islamic-state-of-pakistan&catid=63:general – Accessed 3 September 2009 – Attachment 38.

Professor Shaun Gregory of the University of Bradford discusses a number of alleged incidents in his 2008 paper 'The Christian Minority in Pakistan: Issues and Options'. Professor Gregory states in the paper "that between 30 and 50 Christians are subjected, for reasons of faith, to violent death in Pakistan each year and two to three times that number suffer serious injury". Professor Gregory states that these numbers are based on "UN's Commission for Human Rights and Amnesty International figures", however he does not provide citations for these sources:

Two acts of violence briefly brought international attention to the plight of Christian communities in Pakistan in the aftermath of 9/11. In the first of these 16 Christians were shot and killed, including six children, and two wounded by gunmen during worship at St Dominic's church in the eastern town of Bahawalpur on 28th October 2001; in the second a grenade attack on a Protestant church in Islamabad killed five, including a U.S. Embassy employee and her 17-year-old daughter on 20 March 2002. As one of America's key allies in the international war on terrorism, Pakistan's military government was embarrassed by these attacks, but sought to dismiss them as the actions of fanatics whom the state had quickly

rounded up and imprisoned. The Pakistan government pointed to the presence of many Christians amongst Pakistan's ruling elite and in the higher ranks of its armed forces as evidence of official faith-tolerance.

In fact the attacks were but the tip of an iceberg, momentarily visible expressions of the widespread and systematic violence, intimidation and persecution of Christians in Pakistan. The UN's Commission for Human Rights and Amnesty International figures for 2000-2007 suggest that between 30 and 50 Christians are subjected, for reasons of faith, to violent death in Pakistan each year and two to three times that number suffer serious injury. Beyond that many hundreds are falsely imprisoned, and many thousands are subject to serious physical abuse, intimidation and threat at the hands both of some of the majority Muslim communities and at the hands of elements of the state and local authorities.

...The gravity of anti-Christian violence comes into focus through specific examples. On 20th September 2001 13 year old Christian Riaz Masih was beaten to death in Rawalpindi; on 5th August 2002 assailants attacked a Christian church at Muree killing seven; on August 9th 2002 grenades were thrown at Christian worshippers in Taxila killing four nurses and injuring 20; on September 25th 2002 gunmen entered a Christian welfare organisation's office in Karachi tied up seven workers and executed them with bullets to the head; on 5th January 2004 Father Mukhtar Masih Barkat was shot dead in Multan; in May 2004 Samuel Masih became the seventh person accused of blasphemy to be murdered [in this instance beaten to death by a police officer with an iron bar] before Pakistan's courts could deliver a verdict; in the same month Javed Anjum was kidnapped and tortured for five days by students in a madrassa in Toba Tek Singh before dying subsequently of his injuries; in April 2005 a Christian NGO worker Barbar Sampson and his driver were murdered in Peshawar; in November 2005 Christian homes and schools were destroyed by a rampaging mob in Faisalabad, and between 7-12 August 2006 Christian homes were attacked in villages on the outskirts of Lahore – particularly around Sharqpur – with many injured, three people severely injured and one missing presumed killed.

The scope of this violence and intimidation is illustrated by further examples. On January 15th 2004 a car-bomb exploded outside headquarters of the Pakistan Bible Society in Karachi injuring 16; in April and May 2004 two Christian girls, aged just two and a half and seven, were raped near Lahore, their ordeals failing to subsequently interest the authorities; in June 2004 a homemade bomb was thrown at a church in Kohlu in Baluchistan; in March 2005 madrassa students attacked the construction site of a church in Islamabad injuring 65 Christians and leading the authorities to close the church; also in March Shahbaz Masih was tortured and threatened with death if he did not convert to Islam; in November 2005 three churches, a convent and the homes of six Christian families were set on fire by a rampaging mob some 1,500 to 3,000 strong in the Sangla Hills area; in December 2005 some Christian families were displaced from their homes in and around the Sangla Hills in order to make way for Muslim families affected by the October earthquake, in February 2006 Christian churches, schools and homes were attacked in reaction to the publication of controversial cartoons by a Danish newspaper, in June 2006 a Christian stone mason Nasif Ashraf was severely beaten by a mob for drinking out of a communal glass, and in June 2007 a young Christian man was tortured and gang-raped by up to 30 men for refusing to convert to Islam (Gregory, S. 2008, 'The Christian Minority in Pakistan: Issues and Options', Pakistan Security Research Unit (PSRU), University of Bradford website, 17 July, pp.3-5 <http://spaces.brad.ac.uk:8080/report/attachments/748/brief+37.pdf> – Accessed 13 August 2009 – Attachment 29).

The local Christian media commonly report incidents of alleged ill-treatment of the Christian community, reflecting a view within the community that Christians and other minorities in Pakistan are systematically persecuted or victimised. A story in the *Pakistan Christian Post* on the 28th of July 2009 is illustrative of this common reportage; the article recounts a Rawalpindi Christian's alleged successive attacks by various groups, including the police, after coming to the aid of a youth being attacked. The article suggests that both the youth and his defendant were attacked simply being Christians ('PCC leader beaten on rescue efforts of Christian youth from Muslim attackers' 2009, *Pakistan Christian Post* website, 28 July <http://www.pakistanchristianpost.com/headlinenews.php?hnewsid=1285&usg=AFQjCNGVWGNufxUDVrnM1PWI3otpWKOFGg> – Accessed 7 September 7, 2009 – Attachment 39).

One of the most commonly reported forms of ill-treatment in the Pakistani Christian media are charges of blasphemy laid against Christians. Christians and other minorities have long argued that 295-B and 295-C of the Pakistani penal code are used cynically by the Sunni majority to intimidate them. A recent example of blasphemy allegations reported by Christian press is the case of Hector Aleem:

Hector is running an organization to promote peace in society named as Peace Worldwide. On 21st January 2009, about 50 policemen trespassed Hector's house at midnight. They tortured Hector, his wife and daughters and looted money, gold ornaments and mobile sets etc. Police arrested Aleem and took him to the police station. Later his family came to know he is implicated in a Blasphemy case.

Mr. Sohail Johnson Chief Coordinator Sharing Life Ministry Pakistan & CLAAS team members named Mr. Joseph Francis National Director, Ms. Katharine Kramat and Ms. Roma reached the place and met with Hector's family. They also met with investigation officer and some other authorities to support Hector in this tense situation.

According to the facts collected by Sharing Life Ministry Pakistan and CLAAS team members, a case has been registered vide First Information Report (FIR) No. 767, offence under section 295, 25-D Telegraph Act with police station R-A Bazar Rawalpindi. Case is registered on application submitted by member of Muslim organization Sunee-Tehreek.

According to the complainant, on November 28, 2008, he received a SMS (text message) with derogatory remarks against Prophet Mohammad on his mobile phone. ('Hector Aleem arrested under blasphemy' 2009, *Pakistan Christian Post* website, 27 January <http://www.pakistanchristianpost.com/viewnews.php?newsid=1311> – Accessed 9 September 2009 – Attachment 40).

The *Christian News Today* reports that Hector Aleem's attorney has stated that Hector is being charged simply for his activism in defending the rights of Christians:

Rawalpindi police arrested Hector Aleem, 51, on Jan. 22 and detained him on charges of sending a text message that insulted the Islamic prophet Muhammad. At his Jan. 27 hearing at the Rawalpindi Sessions Court, crowds gathered and began shouting death threats. His attorney, Malik Tafik, told Compass that a local man allegedly framed Aleem for the charges because Aleem has made legal challenges on behalf of Christians involved in a land dispute. Aleem directs a small agency that often defends the rights of Christians (Larson, M. 2009, 'Pakistani Christian Charged with 'Blasphemy' for Text Message', *Christian News Today* website http://www.christiannewstoday.com/christian_news_Report_166.html – Accessed 3 September 2009 – Attachment 41).

In contrast, the non-secular *Dawn* newspaper reported in the September 2009 article ‘Under the Bare Sky’ that Hector Aleem (Haleem) was arrested and imprisoned for illegally selling land to Christian slum dwellers in Rawalpindi that didn’t belong to him (Attachment 29).

In 1998 the then Catholic Bishop of Faisalabad, John Joseph committed suicide in protest at Pakistan’s blasphemy laws on the steps of a Faisalabad courthouse (‘Despatches: Karachi’ 1998, *BBC NEWS* website, 7 May http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/88890.stm – Accessed 3 September 2009 – Attachment 42).

The US Department of State’s 2008 *International Religious Freedom Report: Pakistan* also makes the charge that Pakistan’s blasphemy laws are used cynically to intimidate Christians and other minorities. The following extract from the report provides a number of examples of alleged ill-treatment of Christians using the blasphemy laws. Elsewhere, the report acknowledges that Ahmadis and Shi’ites are more often victims of blasphemy allegations in Pakistan:

Authorities routinely used the blasphemy laws to harass religious minorities and vulnerable Muslims and to settle personal scores or business rivalries. Authorities detained and convicted individuals on spurious charges. Judges and magistrates, seeking to avoid a confrontation with or violence from extremists, often continued trials indefinitely.

...In May 2008 Muslims filed a blasphemy case against Pastor Frank John when he was conducting a religious convention at Green Town, Christian Colony in Lahore. The dispute evolved from an argument between the pastor and some Muslims of the locality. When Christians gathered for the convention, local Muslims stated that no one would be allowed to use the speakers for prayers. The police filed a first information report (FIR) against the pastor on May 3, 2008. The Muslims then pressured the police to register a case against the entire Christian community, but the police refused to do so and asked them to file an application instead. An application was given to police, but a formal case was not registered against the whole community.

...In January 2008 a Sargodha resident was beaten by locals for allegedly arguing against Islam and for Christianity. He sustained severe injuries, but the matter was mediated without any police actions.

According to a minority rights NGO, Ashraf Masih, a Christian, was suspended from his job in Gujranwala in November 2007 for allegedly refusing to separate pages that contained Islamic religious inscriptions from those that did not while clearing out a municipal office. He was later restored in March 2008, but at a lower grade.

According to the NCJP, Abdul Malik, a resident of Burewala, was accused of making derogatory remarks against the Prophet Mohammad in September 2007. Several protests were staged throughout Lahore by various Islamic organizations and demanded that Malik should be arrested and punished for the alleged blasphemy. By the end of the reporting period, a case had been registered against Malik, but he had not been arrested.

In May 2007 authorities arrested 84-year-old Christian Walter Fazal Khan for blasphemy. He was accused of allegedly burning a Qur’an. The family claimed he was a victim of Muslim businessmen who wanted to buy land Khan was selling for much lower than the asking price. After his arrest, local religious leaders forced Khan’s 86-year-old wife to convert to Islam. In June 2007 Khan’s wife died and in July Khan was released.

In April 2007 a mob tortured a Catholic man, Sattar Masih, before police arrived and arrested him for allegedly writing blasphemous words against the Prophet Muhammad. Police reportedly tortured him again in prison to obtain a confession. At the end of the reporting period, Masih remained in prison.

In April 2007 officials accused Salamat Masih, a Christian in Toba Tek Singh, and four members of his family of desecrating papers bearing the Prophet Muhammad's name. Officials arrested Salamat, but the other four remained in hiding, including Salamat's 11-year-old son. According to the NCJP, Masih remained in prison; he has not applied for bail, and his family's location is unknown.

In March 2007 a mob of Muslims attacked Amanat Masih, a Christian, for allegedly desecrating the Qur'an. Police arrested Masih for blasphemy. At the end of the reporting period, he remained in prison.

In November 2006 courts convicted Catholics James Masih and Buta Masih of blasphemy for allegedly burning a Qur'an and sentenced them to 10 years in prison. Both remained in prison, with an appeal pending in the Lahore High Court.

In October 2006 police arrested Ahmadi Mohammed Tariq and charged him under blasphemy laws for allegedly tearing off anti-Ahmadiyya stickers inside a bus. Police released him on bail in December 2006, and at the end of the reporting period, he was awaiting trial.

...In September 2006 in two separate incidents, courts based custody decisions on allegations that the Christian mothers would convert their children to Christianity, and so gave custody of the children to their Muslim fathers. The fathers, however, were suspected of kidnapping their children from the ex-wives. In the first case, a Muslim man was given custody of his 12-year-old daughter Molly because his ex-wife had reconverted to Christianity. Sajad Ahmed Rana gained custody of Molly after telling courts in Lahore that Molly's mother was living with a man in Scotland she was not married to and was not raising Molly in an Islamic home. Molly disappeared from her school in Scotland and reappeared several days later with her father in Lahore. Molly reportedly continued to live with her father in Lahore, and the case was dropped by the mother, still in Scotland. The court gave her the right to visit Molly at any time.

...In September 2005 in Lahore, Younis Masih, a Christian, confronted a Muslim cleric about loud music accompanying a nighttime religious ceremony. During the course of their altercation, Masih allegedly insulted the Prophet Muhammad. Police arrested Masih on charges of blasphemy, and shortly thereafter, a mob attacked the Christian community. Masih was sentenced to death by the district court in Lahore on May 30, 2007. The case was on appeal at the end of the reporting period, and Masih's attorney, Pervez Aslam Chaudhry, was receiving threats, ordering him to stop pursuing the appeals for his client's case (US Department of State 2008, *International Religious Freedom Report: Pakistan*, USDOS website <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2008/108505.htm> – Accessed 3 September 2009 – Attachment 43).

Human Rights Without Frontiers (HRWF) has also extensively catalogued charges of blasphemy and other forms of ill-treated against Christians in Pakistan. The following extract from a 2009 HRWF media release provides information on the legal ordinances concerning blasphemy in Pakistan. The press release that it is from reports that two Christians imprisoned for blasphemy had their convictions overturned in early 2009 after spending two years in prison:

Charges of blasphemy are common in Pakistan and particularly incendiary, often leading to strong shows of religious zeal. **It is not uncommon for sections 295-B and 295-C of the Pakistani penal code to be invoked in retaliation for personal grievances.**

“It is very easy to grab any person for religious reasons,” said Parvez Choudhry, chairman of Legal Aid for the Destitute and Settlement, who specialize in blasphemy cases. “There are many personal cases involving property, or money, or business that motivate the complainant against the accused person. All the cases are falsely charged.”

Pakistan’s blasphemy laws have come under heavy fire from international rights groups. Any private citizen can file blasphemy charges, destroying reputation and livelihood. The charge can possibly lead to the death penalty in the conservative Islamic country.

...”There is a need to repeal these sections [295-B and 295-C],” said Choudhry. “This is considered a draconian law.”

Section 295-C carries a death sentence for anyone found “by words or visible representation or by an imputation or insinuation, directly or indirectly, [to have] defiled the name of the Muhammad of Islam” (Human Rights Without Frontiers 2009, ‘Untitled Document’, HRWF website <http://hrwf.net/uploads/Pakistan%202009.doc> – Accessed 21 September 21 2009 – Attachment 44).

On the 16th of September 2009 the Bishop of the United Presbyterian Church in Pakistan, Timotheus Nasir wrote a highly emotive letter to Pakistan’s President, Asif Ali Zardari, calling upon him to protect the Christian community in Pakistan. The following copy was reprinted by the Pakistan Christian Post:

16th September 2009

His Excellency,
Mr. Asif Ali Zardari,
The President of Islamic Republic Of Pakistan.
President House, Islamabad.

Subject:- The Future of Christian Community in Islamic Republic of Pakistan.

Your Excellency,

I need not remind you the “Hate Crimes” that have been committed against the Christians living in “Islamic Republic of Pakistan. Only in year 2009, in village Kot Lakha Sing District Narowal, Bahmini Wala District Qasoor, Korain District Toba Tek Singh, Gojra District Toba Tek Sing in Punjab and Kotri in Sindh have shaken the Christian community of Islamic Republic of Pakistan. Now a young boy has been killed while in Police custody on false and fabricated accusation under Section 295-B of Pakistan Penal Code.

Your Excellency, most humbly, may I ask, how many more villages will be burned by the majority community of Pakistan. How many more churches will be set ablaze, how many Holy Bibles will be desecrated and how many more innocent Christian men women and young boys will die before the government of Islamic Republic of Pakistan will start trying to think a solution to the problems of Christians of Pakistan?

We have never violated Section 295-B or 295-C of Pakistan Penal Code, yet to Avenge personal dispute with Christians, the Muslim majority, accuse our people of Desecration of Holy Quran and without any investigation our houses are destroyed by fire our churches are burnt, the Holy Bibles are desecrated and “Death Sentences is announced

and innocent people are executed and the Law Enforcing Agencies and the Local Administration joins the “Hate Traders”.

Your Excellency, this routine practice of the Majority community must be stopped at some point. The “Hate Traders” have to be punished and the safety has to be provided to the Christian citizens of Pakistan (If they are citizens of Pakistan and not “Subjects”).

I request you, Your Excellency to take all necessary measures to ensure our legal and constitutional Rights to exist in Islamic Republic of Pakistan. If long term protection can not be provided to Pakistani Christian Citizens, then it would be better to shoot them, so they can get rid of the miseries, fear and sudden unprovoked anger of Muslims and death and destruction that follows.

I thank you in anticipation, Your Excellency, with hope of safer future of Christian Citizens of Pakistan.

Very Faithfully Yours,

Bishop Timotheus Nasir (‘Bishop Timotheus Nasir writes an open letter to President of Pakistan Asif Ali Zardari’ 2009, *Pakistan Christian Post* website <http://www.pakistanchristianpost.com/headlinenewsd.php?hnewsid=1421> – Accessed 21 September 2009 – Attachment 45).

A recent RRT Research and Information response has examined, among other issues, the issue of whether police in Rawalpindi fail to assist Christians and indeed victimise members of the Christian minority (RRT Research and Information 2009, *Research Response pak35396*, 27 August – Attachment 46).

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