



COI QUERY

Country of Origin	PAKISTAN
Title	Survivors of Sexual Violence in Punjab Province
Reference period	January 2021 to March 2023
Topic(s)	<ol style="list-style-type: none">Treatment of female survivors of sexual violence, in particular rape, by society and family members in the Punjab province (January 2021-March 2023)Instances of sexual violence against Christian women in the Punjab province, with a focus on the city of Multan (January 2015-March 2023)
Date of completion	17 April 2023
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All sources used are referenced and cited in the bibliography section. A quality review has been performed in line with the above mentioned COI methodology. This document does not claim to be exhaustive or conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim to international protection. If a certain event, person or organisation is not mentioned in the report, this does not mean that the event has not taken place or that the person or organisation does not exist. Terminology used should not be regarded as indicative of a particular legal position.

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COI QUERY RESPONSE – Pakistan

Survivors of Sexual Violence in Punjab Province

1. Treatment of female survivors of sexual violence, in particular rape, by society and family members in the Punjab province (January 2021-March 2023)

Information about treatment of female survivors of sexual violence, in particular rape, by society and family members in the Punjab province was scarce among the sources consulted by EUAA within time constraints. However, the following information may be relevant.

A 2022 Country Information Report on Pakistan compiled by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) of the Australian Government affirmed that gender-based violence (GBV) was often not being reported, attributing it to stigma and that ‘victims of rape often avoid reporting for fear they will be blamed or killed for “dishonouring” their family’. The source added that ‘domestic violence is commonly seen as a private family issue.’¹ Amnesty International (AI) stated in the report on the human rights situation covering 2022 published in 2023, that gender-based violence cases receive ‘very low’ convictions.² Human Rights Watch (HRW) included in its World Report 2023 regarding Pakistan that ‘Violence against women and girls—including rape, murder, acid attacks, domestic violence, and forced and child marriage—remained widespread’.³

An online journal called The Conversation in 2022 stated that being a victim of rape has been a motive for perpetrators of ‘honour killings’, who are ‘husbands, fathers, sons, brothers, uncles, cousins, and in some cases, strangers hired by the victims’ families’.⁴

A 2021 report titled Barriers to Women Accessing Justice published by the Asian Development Bank, described that stigma, low conviction rates, victim blaming, family pressures, and fear of reprisal from the perpetrator were factors in discouraging survivors of rape to report or to delay reporting crimes they faced.⁵ The same source stated that the family of the survivor ‘often pressure them to keep it under cover’.⁶

Within the reference period of this COI Query Response, no further information on treatment of female survivors of sexual violence, in particular rape, by society and family members in the Punjab province could be found among all public sources consulted within the limited time for

¹ Pakistan, DFAT, DFAT Country Information Report – Pakistan, 25 January 2022, [url](#), p. 31

² AI, Report 2022/23: The State of the World's Human Rights, 27 March 2023, [url](#), p. 287

³ HRW, World Report 2023, Pakistan, 12 January 2023, [url](#)

⁴ Conversation (The), Pakistan again faces questions over ‘honour’ killings as brother acquitted of social media star’s murder, 3 March 2022, [url](#)

⁵ Asian Development Bank, Court Companion on Gender-Based Violence Cases, September 2021, [url](#), p.36

⁶ Asian Development Bank, Court Companion on Gender-Based Violence Cases, September 2021, [url](#), p. 36-37



drafting this document. Below follows some information outside the reference period and location that may be relevant.

According to a 2020 article by a local news source called Dawn, citing a police study on ‘honour killings’ in Sindh province, being a survivor of sexual assault or rape was listed as a motive.⁷

According to a 2022 article by Samaa, a local news agency, on the frequency of rape in Pakistan, ‘societal stigma and fear of retributive violence prevents women from reporting cases’.⁸

The 2021 US Department of State (USDOS) annual report on human rights practices in Pakistan, described that ‘there were reports of traditional jirga or panchayat systems of community justice, typically used to resolve low-level disputes, used for cases of rape in rural areas, which may have resulted in a survivor being forced to marry the attacker, or a family member on the survivor’s side being allowed to rape a family member of the accused/defendant’s side.’⁹

In 2021, the Lahore High Court in Punjab outlawed ‘virginity tests’ for examination of sexual assault survivors on the basis that it is against the constitution and does not carry any forensic value in examinations.¹⁰ The Pakistani Justice that made the judgement described the ‘virginity tests’ as ‘a humiliating practice, which is used to cast suspicion on the victim’.¹¹ The tests, which are to examine the sexual activity of a woman by a police officer or doctor, continued to occur despite being outlawed, according to Fuller Project, a news journal on women issues. The same source elaborated on a rape victim in Pakistan, who reported the case to the police, was subject to the ‘virginity test’, bribed by the perpetrator’s family, and evicted from her home due to the perpetrator’s influence. According to the source, a police officer questioned why the survivor would continue the case and ‘why she wanted such a big stain on her honour’.¹²

According to a 2020 article by Naya Daur, a local news source which cited a Pakistani lawmaker named Shandana Gulzar, at least 82 % of rape perpetrators are family members, such as that include fathers, brothers, grandfathers, and uncles, of the rape survivors.¹³

In 2019, Samaa TV, a local news source, quoting Nazish Brohi, a researcher of a non-governmental organization called War Against Rape, described that in ‘so many cases’ the woman knows her rapist ‘in some way or the other’. The news source added that a rapist known to the family or a member of the family, makes survivors reluctant to disclose their rape ‘because you are raising a finger at someone the whole family knows’.¹⁴ The article further

⁷ Dawn, 510 women, 259 men fell prey to ‘honour’ killing during five years in Sindh, 19 February 2020, [url](#)

⁸ SAMAA TV, Safe nowhere: A woman is raped every two hours in Pakistan, 12 October 2022, [url](#)

⁹ USDOS, Country Report on Human Rights Practices for 2021 – Pakistan, 12 April 2022, [url](#)

¹⁰ USDOS, Country Report on Human Rights Practices for 2022 – Pakistan, 20 March 2023, [url](#)

¹¹ Guardian (The), Virginity tests for female rape survivors outlawed by Pakistani court, 6 January 2021, [url](#)

¹² Fuller Project, ‘The Pain Was Unbearable’: Thousands of Women Subjected to Banned ‘Virginity Tests’, 17 September 2021, [url](#)

¹³ Naya Daur, Over 82 Per Cent Of Rapists Are Fathers Or Brothers Of Victim: PTI MNA, 15 September 2020, [url](#)

¹⁴ SAMAA TV, This is why women won’t report rape in Pakistan, 17 June 2019, [url](#)



explained that ‘women’s families often do not even find out’ due to the ‘stigma of rape and the abuse’ and fear of revenge from the perpetrator.¹⁵

According to BBC News article from 2020, after a ‘top’ police officer ‘partly’ blamed the survivor of a gang-rape in Punjab province, Moneeza Ahmed a feminist activist, stated that ‘blaming the victim, judging a woman’s character to determine whether she was a victim; these are rooted in our society for decades’.¹⁶

Several articles from prior to 2015 have highlighted that rape and GBV in Pakistan have been associated with stigma, impacting a family’s honour and crimes have not often been reported.¹⁷

2. Instances of sexual violence against Christian women in the Punjab province, with a focus on the city of Multan (January 2015-March 2023)

Information about sexual violence against Christian women in the city of Multan was scarce among the sources consulted by EUAA within time constraints. However, the following information may be relevant.

The USDOS 2021 Report on International Religious Freedom, sets the percentage of Christian population in Pakistan at 1.6 % referring to 2017.¹⁸ In 2021, ‘the Christian religious and political leadership’ expressed doubts about the accuracy of the census results.¹⁹ The USDOS 2021 Report on International Religious Freedom noted that the results were disputed by ‘several minority rights advocacy groups’ which considered they underestimated the actual figures and their ‘political influence’ claiming the relation between the results of the census and ‘minority seat allocation in the national and provincial parliaments’.²⁰

The 2021 Report on International Religious Freedom states that ‘multiple cases of forced marriage and conversion of Christian women and girls were reported in Punjab’.²¹ According to the Coalition for Religious Equality and Inclusive Development (CREID), an institute conducting research on religious discrimination, addressing poverty and exclusion ‘and promoting people’s wellbeing’²², the principal form of violence that Christian women in Pakistan face is ‘statutory rape’.²³ Agenzia Fides, an information service of the Pontifical Mission Societies, states that ‘most of the violence against Christians occurs in Punjab’.²⁴ The

¹⁵ SAMAA TV, This is why women won’t report rape in Pakistan, 17 June 2019, [url](#)

¹⁶ BBC News, Pakistan outcry over police victim-blaming of gang-raped mother, 19 September 2020, [url](#)

¹⁷ New Humanitarian (The), Tormented by stigma after rape, 9 November 2011, [url](#); PBS News, The Stigma of Reporting a Rape in Pakistan, 28 May 2013, [url](#); WUNRN, Pakistan – Christian Girls Abducted & Forced into Muslim Marriages, 14 September 2015, [url](#)

¹⁸ USDOS, International Religious Freedom 2021 - Pakistan, 2 June 2022, [url](#), p. 4

¹⁹ Daily Times, Christians ‘disappointed’ by census results, 7 June 2021, [url](#)

²⁰ USDOS, 2021 Report on International Religious Freedom: Pakistan, 2 June 2022, [url](#), p. 4

²¹ USDOS, 2021 Report on International Religious Freedom: Pakistan, 2 June 2022, [url](#), p. 14

²² Institute of Development Studies, Programmes and centres, n.d., [url](#)

²³ CREID, Experiences of Intersecting Inequalities for Christian Women and Girls in Pakistan, Policy Briefing 3, 1 December 2020, [url](#), p. 1

²⁴ Agenzia Fides, ASIA/PAKISTAN - Violence against religious minorities: the emergency continues, 1 June 2020, [url](#)



source does not specify on the nature of the violence reported and further corroboration could not be found.

The organisation Sustainable Social Development Organization (SSDO) using information from first information reports (FIR) registered with the police ranked the district of Multan as 4th in terms of prevalence of rape cases in Punjab during the period 1st January 2022 to 31st October 2022 which amounted to 140.²⁵ Additional information on prevalence of rape cases, concerning Christian women in particular, could not be found. However, the following information may be relevant.

An appeal, dated 26 October 2022, issued by UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) reported, without mentioning the source, that the abduction of girls and women belonging to Hindu and Christian minorities with the purpose of forcing them to convert them to Islam was extended and ‘they are then allegedly raped and/or forcibly married and forced to convert to Islam, sometimes under the threat of violence and with the direct involvement of religious clerics’.²⁶ Open Doors, an organisation working on supporting Christians who suffer from religious discrimination, in its report published in 2022 on ‘The Persecution of Christian women and girls’ states ‘The abduction and sexual violence of religious minorities is also endemic within local communities, such as in Pakistan where men seek out underage Christian girls for marriage and forced conversion’.²⁷

The Women’s UN Report Network (WUNRN) published on 25 May 2015 ‘Abductions, forced marriages and conversions have become a disturbing trend in Pakistan’ and ‘Rape is being used as a weapon of persecution against Christian girls in Pakistan’.²⁸ Specific figures and statistics to corroborate this trend could not be found within the time constraints to complete the query. The report by Movement Solidarity and Peace (MSP) published in 2014 states that ‘the abduction and forced marriage of Christian women is accompanied by sexual abuse and domestic violence bordering on torture’.²⁹

Some instances of incidents of sexual violence against Christian girls and women that occurred in Punjab province during the reference period include:

- Citing the British Pakistan Christian Association (BPCA), the Asian Human Rights Commission, refers to an incident that took place on 2 December 2015 in Punjab province that led to the kidnapping, rape and forced marriage of two sisters³⁰.

²⁵ SSDO, Violence against Women and Children in Punjab, 2022, 29 November 2022, [url](#), p. 2

²⁶ OHCHR, Mandates of the Special Rapporteur on minority issues; the Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief; the Special Rapporteur on the sale and sexual exploitation of children, including child prostitution, child pornography and other child sexual abuse material; the Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of slavery, including its causes and consequences; the Special Rapporteur on trafficking in persons, especially women and children; the Special Rapporteur on violence against women and girls, its causes and consequences and the Working Group on discrimination against women and girls, AL PAK 6/2022, 26 October 2022, [url](#), p. 1

²⁷ Open Doors, The Persecution of Christian Women and Girls, 2022, [url](#), p. 6

²⁸ WUNRN, Pakistan – Christian Girls Abducted & Forced into Muslim Marriages, 14 September 2015, [url](#)

²⁹ MSP, Forced Marriages & Forced Conversions in the Christian Community of Pakistan, April 2014, [url](#), p. 24

³⁰ AHRC, PAKISTAN: Forced marriages and conversions stem from institutionalised intolerance, 25 February 2016, [url](#)



- On 27 January 2019, in Faisalabad, Punjab province, a 14-year-old Christian girl was abducted, forced to get married to a man and she was physically abused when she refused.³¹
- On 20 May 2020, in Faisalabad, Punjab province, a 15-year-old girl of Christian faith, Saba Nadeem, was kidnapped, forced to convert to Islam, raped and forced to marry her captor.³²
- On 6 December 2020, in Rawalpindi, Punjab province, the Express Tribune, reported the murder of a Christian girl by a ‘Muslim suitor’³³ when ‘her parents rejected a marriage proposal’.³⁴

³¹ OHCHR, Mandates of the Special Rapporteur on minority issues; the Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief; the Special Rapporteur on the sale and sexual exploitation of children, including child prostitution, child pornography and other child sexual abuse material; the Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of slavery, including its causes and consequences; the Special Rapporteur on trafficking in persons, especially women and children; the Special Rapporteur on violence against women and girls, its causes and consequences and the Working Group on discrimination against women and girls, AL PAK 6/2022, 26 October 2022, [url](#), p.2

³² Kross Konnection, ‘I was abducted and raped’: Christian ‘child bride’ tells court, 6 June 2022, [url](#); OHCHR, Mandates of the Special Rapporteur on minority issues; the Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief; the Special Rapporteur on the sale and sexual exploitation of children, including child prostitution, child pornography and other child sexual abuse material; the Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of slavery, including its causes and consequences; the Special Rapporteur on trafficking in persons, especially women and children; the Special Rapporteur on violence against women and girls, its causes and consequences and the Working Group on discrimination against women and girls, AL PAK 6/2022, 26 October 2022, [url](#), p. 8

³³ UCANews, Pakistani Christian girl shot dead by Muslim suitor, 4 December 2020, [url](#)

³⁴ Express Tribune (The), Christian girl killed for rejecting marriage proposal of Muslim man, 6 December 2020, [url](#)

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