

CONTEXTUALIZING BLASPHEMY LAWS AND PAKISTANI MINORITIES; A CASE STUDY OF CHRISTIAN MINORITY IN LAHORE

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Abstract

Blasphemy laws in Pakistan have been a subject of international concern due to their potential misuse and the impact on religious minorities. This research paper focuses on Christian minority in Lahore, Pakistan, as a case study to understand the multifaceted challenges they face within the framework of these laws. The paper explores the historical context, social implications, and legal aspects of blasphemy laws in Pakistan and their specific impact on the Christian community in Lahore.

Key Words: Blasphemy, Laws, Minorities, Oppression, Discrimination, Development

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Introduction:

In Pakistan, the Blasphemy Law has assumed an alarming situation during the period of General *Zia-ul-Haqq*, when he introduced changes in clauses 295-B and 295-c in 1985. Those amended clauses allowed many sentences to the blasphemous. Even the death penalty would be awarded to the blasphemous and life imprisonment to the offenders. Meanwhile the religious parties approached Federal Shariat Court in 1990 which ordered to delete clause of alternative life imprisonment from 295-C, (M.A.Ghazi 1998) which the National Assembly and the Senate, both the assemblies, confirmed in 1992 by bringing changes in the Blasphemy Law.

Literature Review:

I have divided my literature review into two categories; books and research articles, which will give a conceptual as well as factual understanding of the concept of Blasphemy law, its history and its consequences upon the minorities of Pakistan. All those books and articles have not shed light on the effects of blasphemy laws upon the Christians of Lahore city, which may be considered a great historical gap.

The edited book by Brett G. Scharffs and Asher Maoz¹ gives a comprehensive inquiry about socio-legal perspectives of religious freedom of world. It describes various problems and their solutions being faced by the religious freedom of the world communities. Meanwhile this book is a great help to the readers, writers and legal experts to comprehend nature of constitutional and legal issues of the religious freedom and the ways to protect the religious freedom in the world. Though it gives a world overview of the religious freedom rights but does not carry a specific area narration like Lahore city which a great historical gap.

The book of Imtiaz Ahmad² provides a religio-economic as well as social currents which seriously affect upon scheduled castes in Pakistan's society. This book is a very good attempt to understand the sociological perspectives of Pakistan's scheduled castes, shedding light on the issues confronted by the minorities and how they cope up with those issues with consistent struggle. But this book does not describe about Christian citizens of Pakistan particularly in city of Lahore, which is a great historical gap.

¹ Brett G Scharffs, Asher Maoz and Ashley Isaacson. 2018. *Religious Freedom and the Law: Emerging Contexts for Law and Religion*. Routledge, Abingdon: Cambridge University Press.

² Ahmed, Imtiaz. 1983. *Minorities, Minorities in Pakistan: A Sociological Study of Scheduled Castes in Pakistan*. Karachi: Royal Book Company.

The book by Rana Ejaz Ali Khan³ gives an introduction about blasphemy laws, its constitutional details and its impacts upon Pakistan's society. As a very valuable source of information, this book guides individuals to seek understanding of complex issues and debates of blasphemy law in context of Pakistan's society. Though book recommends various reforms to rectify the shortcomings of Blasphemy laws but does not describe enough about Christians of Lahore affected by Blasphemy laws which is a great historical gap.

In the category of research articles, Jonathan Fox⁴, Ruth O'Brien⁵, Tariq Mahmood⁶, Naushaba Atta and Khushbakht Hina⁷ and Kamran Ahmed⁸ have made attempts to analyze the problems facing by Christian minorities of Pakistan but not even a single author has described in detail about effects of Blasphemy laws over the Christian community of Lahore city which is a great historical gap, which needs to be bridged.

Blasphemy Laws in Pakistan:

In Pakistan, the Blasphemy Law in Pakistan Penal Code and Criminal Procedure Code has acted as a catalyst to determine Muslim-Christian relationship in the country. Having a historical background, in the decade of 1860, the British introduced Blasphemy Law when Lord Macaulay brought changes in the clauses of section 295 in India's Penal Code so that defaming of worship places would be stopped as such acts damaged religious emotions of Indian people. If a single person (man/woman) or a group of people tried to injure and defile a worshiping place (mosque, Church or *Gurdawara*), so that they consciously damaged the religious sentiments of the other

³ Khan, Rana Ejaz Ali. 2014. *Blasphemy in Pakistan: Catch-22*. Islamabad: Abhimanyu Publishers, Pakistan.

⁴ Fox, Jonathan. 2013. "Blasphemy Laws and Religious Minorities in Pakistan." *Journal of Church and State*, Oxford University Press, New York, USA.

⁵ O'Brien, Ruth. 2016. "The Role of Blasphemy Laws in Pakistan's Persecution of Religious Minorities." *Columbia Journal of Transnational Law*, Columbia University School of Law, New York.

⁶ Mahmood, Tariq. 2009. "Religion, State and Society in Pakistan: A Historical Overview of the Legal Framework for Religious Freedom." *International Journal of Constitutional Law*, Oxford University Press, New York, USA.

⁷ Hina, Naushaba Atta & Khushbakht. 2015. "Violence against Christians in Pakistan; A Study of the causes and Effects of its Growth." *Journal of Social and Behavioral Sciences*, Elsevier, Amsterdam, Netherlands.

⁸ Ahmed, Kamran. 2018. "The Christian Minority in Pakistan; Perspectives on Survival and Challenges." *International Journal of Social Science and Humanity*, Singapore.

faith. In this case a sentence of two-year imprisonment or the both will be given as a penalty.⁹ In 1927, this sentence was added after the popular case of *Rangila Rasul* by including the verbal and pictorial insults as well. The British intended to introduce such changes so that the public order could be maintained by preventing the religious skirmishes among the various religious communities. Having the British origin, sections (295, 298) of Pakistan Penal Code also continued in Pakistan, which were modified by General Zia during his era. During General Zia, an emphasis was given to increase the imprisonment of blasphemous from two years to ten years and also enhanced the fine amount. Therefore, Zia changes in Article 295 were introduced which intended to give harsh sentences if anybody involves in outraging religious emotions of other religious community and found guilty maliciously and deliberately insulting others' religious beliefs. Similarly, Article 295-B deals with the offenders who would try to defile the Holy Quran and will receive life imprisonment as a penalty. Some scholars and human right activists like *I.A. Rehman* trace historical description of emergence of religious fanaticism in Pakistan as a social and economic competition which gradually increased due to the implementation of state segregated constitutional acts, resulting into breaking forces of cohesiveness among children of Pakistan. *I.A. Rehman* described the situation of mutual relationships between the Christian and Muslim population in Lahore that the religious fanaticism stopped the holding of joint sports activities in Lahore, leading towards holding of segregated sports activities resulting into gradual socio-economic marginalization.¹⁰

Mostly Christians from the slums areas of under-developed smaller cities and towns of Punjab began moving towards the developed areas of Lahore and began living in places jointly with Muslims in Lahore city, resulting into a social resistance began from the fanatic Muslims. Later this competition was remained continuing at all level irrespective of their richness and social status.¹¹ In the initial years of Pakistan making after 1947, a trend was observed in the Muslims elites' families that they always kept the male Christian servants for their household matters. In the Muslim houses, those Christian servants performed the multiple tasks relating with the matters

⁹ Gabriel, Theodore. 2007. *Christian Citizens in an Islamic State, The Pakistan Experience*, London: Routledge. P. 60. The British later also introduced changes in sections of 296 and 297.

¹⁰ Rehman, I.A., interview by Saeed Ahmed Butt. 2019. Conditions of Lahore Christians after 1947 (30 August Friday).

¹¹ Butt, Saeed Ahmed. 2021. *Contextualizing Marginality of Christian Community in Lahore from 1947 to 2015*. Unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation, University of the Punjab. p.112.

of household activities like ironing the clothes, cooking the foods and driving vehicles for pick and drop of the family members including the female members in the house. The emerging economic competition among the Muslim and non-Muslim communities gradually changed this trend. The emerging economic competition and tussle towards a new typo of hatred by Muslims towards Christians. *I.A. Rehman* also opines that the gradual socio-economic competition became a prime reason behind the attacks by the middle-income Muslims' landlords against efficient Christians' land lords. In this way, the misuse of the blasphemy laws against the opponents, belonging to the non-Muslim communities, assumed a currency in the Pakistani society. With the passage of time, the blasphemy laws also assumed its shape in the Muslim society of Pakistan, when it was based on the sectarian colour and its applications was now centric Muslims versus Muslims rather than Christians-Muslims conflict.¹² In the changed circumstances, the citizenship of Christians in Pakistan particularly in Lahore city has seriously damaged as the Constitution of Pakistan guarantees equal citizenship to Christian community, but it does not exist in reality before law. As the matters of *Hudood* cases are only concerned with Christians, but justice is dispensed by appointing the judges compulsorily having the religion of Islam. However, the *Hudood* regulations are applied to Christians, yet they cannot employ the Christian legal counselors.¹³

The Blasphemy Laws do not only target the Christian community rather those have also seriously affected *Ahmadiyya* community, which was declared non-Muslims by Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto. As a major affected community of Lahore city, the enumeration of cases with blasphemy charges were listed against Christian community. Various alterations were introduced by General Zia in blasphemy laws of Pakistan. According to this, anybody would be considered a blasphemous, if he would ask questions about the last Prophethood of Muhammad (Peace Be Upon Him).¹⁴ *Iftikhar Malik* sheds light on the aims behind Zia's changes in Blasphemy Laws and declares those changes only to appease the fanatics and conservatives Muslims in Pakistan.¹⁵ (Malik 1999) In this scenario, these changes could be seen as a part and parcel of Islamization introduced by General Zia in Pakistan, which would legitimize Zia era by strengthening Muslim

¹² Rehman, I.A., 2019. Conditions of Lahore Christians after 1947.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Butt, Saeed Ahmed. 2021. *Contextualizing Marginality of Christian Community in Lahore from 1947 to 2015*. p.112.

¹⁵ H. Malik, Iftikhar. 1999. *Islam, Nationalism and the West: Issues of identity in Pakistan*. London: Palgrave. p. 303.

conservative support for legitimizing his unconstitutional steps. From 1989 to 2015, the blasphemy laws in Lahore city have also used twenty and twenty-eight times against *Ahmadis* and Christians respectively.

From 1989-2015, Religion Wise Blasphemy Cases in Lahore

| Ahmedi | Christian | Muslim | Unknown |
|---------------|------------------|---------------|----------------|
| 20 | 28 | 107 | 10 |
| Total | | 173 | |

Source: Saeed Ahmed Butt, p.112

Most of the blasphemous cases were registered due to merely a gossip and rumour spread by the interested individuals getting support from the fanatic groups against a single individual or a community having the selfish motives. In order to introduce amendment in the blasphemy laws of Pakistan, an attempt was made in 1995 that if a false accusation of blasphemy is put against any person and the charges of blasphemy are not proved, then a jail imprisonment of ten years would be imposed upon the persons who put such false allegations.¹⁶ Moreover, before the registration of case against the accuser under Blasphemy Law, a DC (District Deputy Commissioner) level officer would examine and explore the relevant case by judging its relevant facts. This development was considered a constructive development, but this step was set side after facing an opposition from religious parties in the assemblies of Punjab and Balochistan, who put forward resolutions against this step.¹⁷ In present circumstances, if such a complaint is received, a SP rank police officer would make his inquiry report after examining the facts and figures of charges against the accused after an investigation, he would give his recommendations about the accused and the level of charges in his report through his submission to the highest ups. This is a very good step in the right direction so that no shortcoming may be left in the upcoming trial for the accused. If we see the number of cases from 1989 to 2015, the following trend has prevailed in Lahore in the past;

¹⁶ Butt, Saeed Ahmed. 2021. p.112-113.

¹⁷ Ghazzali, Abdul Sattar. 1996. *Islamic Pakistan: Illusions and Reality*. Islamabad: National Book Club. 237.

Gender Wise Blasphemy Cases in Lahore

| Gender | Number of Cases |
|----------------|------------------------|
| Male | 146 |
| Female | 20 |
| Unknown | 07 |
| Total | 173 |

Source: Butt, Saeed Ahmed. 2021.¹⁸

The case of Tahir Iqbal, a converted Muslim Pakistani citizen to Christian religion, faced the charges of apostasy as well as those of the blasphemy. Due to the application of blasphemous charges, a death penalty was announced to him. In this case, an interesting fact was disclosed that the lawyers of Tahir Iqbal were not ready to defend him from the blasphemous charges due to the danger of accused and his lawyer as some fanatic elements might cause a violence in the society, “which is a great stigma on our judicial system.”¹⁹ In most of the cases, the poor accused person cannot take the services and advice of lawyers due to his belonging to poverty, which needs the support of state and government so that the appointment of capable lawyers may contest the case on legal genuine grounds so that the poor people may also receive the hope of justice. It is seen that lawyers do not take responsibility to plead the cases of blasphemy. In this way, finding a suitable and capable lawyer becomes a cumbersome issue. It also happens that if a lawyer is found for pleading the case, he/she is sometimes either killed or injured by the fanatic religious bigot groups. Even the judges have faced victimization in such blasphemous cases when they have acquitted the blasphemour from charges of blasphemy. The killing of Judge Arif *Iqbal Hussain Bhatti*, in October 1977 is such an example, who declared a Christian family innocent from the charges of blasphemy.

The personal vendetta and the economic gains are the basic reasons behind the fake registering blasphemous cases in Pakistan, which severely disturb but sometimes handicap overall prevailing environment of Pakistani state. Meanwhile various unconstitutional developments and military governments have brought political instability in the governance of Pakistan, resulting

¹⁸ Butt, Saeed Ahmed. 2021. p.114.

¹⁹ Ibid.

into futile debates including violence and wars.²⁰ The issue of Kashmir has developed Pakistan into a permanent tussle and confrontation with India. On the other hand, Afghanistan as a neighbor of Pakistan has greatly provided a loss and damages to the social-political and economic life of Pakistan converting into political instable Pakistan. The expulsion of Taliban rule previously from Afghanistan by US with Pakistan support gave a new world role to Pakistan in war against terrorism, putting Pakistan into added quandary. Mostly Pakistanis have not accepted alliance of Pakistan-US unity against Islamic fanaticism and fundamentalism. The emergence of Islamic despotic and fundamentalist groups has severely damaged by targeting Church buildings and enhancing discernment against Christians throughout Pakistan as described by Archbishop Saldhana of Lahore. The major reason behind this discrimination is that the identification of Pakistani Christians made them linked with the Westernized countries, which sharpened more stratification in the society of Lahore.²¹ The US military agreements with the European states and US aid and financial support to the Pakistani Christians have also brought hostility in Muslim attitude towards the Christians of Pakistan. The wars in Afghanistan and Iraq have also widened the breach between local Christians and Muslims in Pakistan, which has resulting into discernment against Christians, as stated by Lawrence Saldhana. Sometimes the Muslim state ministers give provoking and unrealistic statements which seriously damage the religious emotions of the minorities living in Pakistan. As *Ijaz-ul- Haqq*, former Religious Minister of General Pervez Musharraf era, stated that if a change took place in law of blasphemy, there will be no law except the law of jungle prevailing in streets of Pakistan. Even he also continued to comment vehemently to lose of 1000000 Christians' lives if an attempt will be made to repeal the Blasphemy Laws.

Peter Jacob explains about blasphemy laws of Pakistan have made on religious basis, which give great threats to the lives of non-Muslims as well negate the modern democratic rights which minorities enjoy throughout the world.²² The Blasphemy laws of Pakistan curtail democratic rights like sociability, political freedom, liberty and political expressions of minorities particularly the Christians. A great sensitivity of Minorities in Pakistan has emerged gradually about the Blasphemy Laws of Pakistan that only the religious sentiments of the Muslims are hurt due to blasphemous cases when a non-Muslim is involved in such cases. But

²⁰ Ibid.113.

²¹ Ibid.114.

²² Jacob, Peter. 2014, "*Religious Freedom in Pakistan: An analysis with restriction-persecution Cycle Framework*. *Al-mushir* 55 (01), Christian Study Centre, Rawalpindi, Pakistan, 22-23.

what would be the attitude of the state if a person having an Islamic faith threatens the life and property of a person belonging to non-Islamic faith. In such incidents, the minorities leaderships claim that either the state remains silent or the state does not register even a single case against the criminals and blasphemous people. Even the inclusion of religious recognition in the passport of Pakistani state also shows the state’s attitude and behaviour towards the citizens.²³ Consisting of many religious communities, it has never happened in Pakistan that not even a single case has registered against a Muslim who has severely damaged the emotional as well as religious sacredness of the non-Muslims through his writings, speech and actions. Many wrongdoings in Pakistan’s blasphemy laws have enhanced the surge of Muslim religious understandings in sacrosanct Pakistanis state, paving the way to make Pakistan’s society towards more sectarian based society, which is resulted into a basic factor behind the registration of frequent blasphemy cases in Pakistan.”²⁴ As there are about one thousand three hundred and thirty-four registered cases of blasphemy in Lahore from 1987 to 2017 as given in;

From 1987 to 2017, Registered Blasphemy cases in Pakistan

| | |
|------------|------|
| Muslims | 774 |
| Ahmadi | 501 |
| Christians | 219 |
| Hindus | 29 |
| Unknown | 11 |
| Total | 1534 |

Source: (Monitor 2018)

Declaring blasphemy law as reverting, *I.A.Rahim* senses a great danger to minorities freedom, association, religious beliefs and discrimination in Pakistan as consequences of applying blasphemy laws. These blasphemy laws have conflicted with the constitutional and fundamental rights of minorities in Pakistan.²⁵ He also indicated that General *Zia-ul-Haqq* had no mandate to amend those laws and considered Pakistani society as less intolerant society before application of

²³ Ali, Charles Amjad, 2015. “From Dislocation to Dislocation: The Experience of the Christian Community in Pakistan.” *International Review of Modern Sociology*, Vol. 41, (1): p. 23.

²⁴ Saeed Ahmed Butt, p.114.

²⁵ I.A. Rahim, ‘*A critique of Pakistan’s Blasphemy Laws*’, in Tarik Jan, pp. 195-207, p. 199.

blasphemy laws. *Abdul Sattar Ghazzali* considers changes in Blasphemy laws introduced by General Zia as a prime reason behind the emergence of extremism and intolerance resulting into immoderation and radicalism in Pakistan.²⁶ *Shabaz Anwar Bhatti* has considered it as a naked sword moving over the heads of Christian community in Pakistan.²⁷ In creating a balanced and tolerant society in Pakistan, its very necessary to keep the considerations of Christians and other minorities, who take blasphemy laws as a constant threat to performance of their religious belief and freedom in Pakistan. Therefore, the Christians always demand to scrape the Blasphemy Laws, constantly demand by foreign states as countries as well, which has not materialized yet. Though President Musharraf tried to scrape blasphemy laws but his efforts also proved futile. “The most important significance of such cases is that even anybody declares cleared from the charges of blasphemy, the fanatic people might try to assassinate that person though he has not proved guilty of such allegations. As described by the *Christian Voice*, a step to bring changes in Pakistan’s Blasphemy Laws would be considered a great initiative to de-institutionalize the prevailing bigotry and narrow-mindedness in the Pakistani society.²⁸ As *I.A. Rehman* opines that Blasphemy laws in Pakistan generates offence rather to treat offence.”²⁹

Beginning around 1986, the quantity of passings, misleading convictions, improper detainments, instances of torment and religiously-motivated savagery has risen essentially. As indicated by Public Commission for Equity and Harmony (NCJP) of Catholic Church, starting around 1986 no less than 892 individuals have been blamed for profanation, and more than 550 have been officially charged. More than 300 cases have been enlisted. It is critical to take note of that when sacrilege regulations were first presented, most of blamed were non-Muslims and especially Christians. Nonetheless, as of late Muslims themselves have begun utilizing the law against one another, and it is assessed that forty nine percent (49%) of all out number of disrespect cases starting around 1986 influence Muslims. The Ahmadiyya people group, who believe themselves to be Muslims yet are viewed by numerous different Muslims as un-Islamic, are frequently focused on with sacrilege charges, representing thirty seven percent (37%) of all cases. It is accepted that thirteen percent (13%) cases are connected with the Christians, and one percent (1%) Hindus. Somewhere around 25 individuals have been killed in the wake of being blamed for

²⁶ Ghazzali, p. 139.

²⁷ *Pakistan Christian Post* (30 May 2006)

²⁸ Butt, Saeed Ahmed. 2021. ... p.114.

²⁹ Rehman, I.A., interview by Saeed Ahmed Butt. 2019. Conditions of Lahore Christians after 1947.

disrespect, in spite of the fact that capital punishment has not yet been applied regardless by the State. As The National Commission for Justice and Peace (NCJP) gave a conclusion that in recent years, the blasphemy laws have assumed a great disturbing and gigantic impact in the domain of religion than any other law in Pakistan.³⁰

In many cases of blasphemy, religious difference is not the issue rather such cases have the background of either the personal vendettas or to grab the precious land. The blasphemous accusations also resulted into communal violence and conflict as it happened in the case of *Badami Bagh* incident in Lahore. All-Pakistan Minorities Alliance (APMA) claimed that Christian homes and residences were burnt within the minutes and the residents escaped from such incidents and took refuge in safe places so that their lives could be saved from the anger of fanatics. Even it is claimed by the eye-witnesses that the attack on Christian settlements and houses was properly planned, as the buses were provided to the people so that they might attack over the houses and churches in the shape of a mob. On 9 March 2013, a crowd of around 3000 individuals torched around 200 houses, something like 12 shops, and two chapels that made up the to a great extent Christian neighborhood of Joseph Colony in Lahore's Badami Bagh area. Claimed by Lahore Civil Enterprise, home to numerous disinfection laborers work in different pieces of the city. The occupants got away from the assault, yet one of them, Sawan Masih, is as of now waiting for capital punishment following allegations of profanation. In case of Sawan Masih, the court records described that the complainants put charges that in early of 7 March 2013, Sawan Masih “out of nowhere begun expressing overly critical comments against our last Prophet (Peace Be Upon Him) ... We attempted to grasp a him however he escaped away.” After Friday prayers on 8 March, horde of people, including complainant reached at Joseph Colony and charged Sawan Masih with the denouncement of Prophet Muhammad (Peace Be Upon Him) and requested to see him. They also said that Sawan Masih uttered very critical words against Prophet Muhammad (Peace Be upon Him) and they would not allow him leaving until he would be snubbed compulsorily. Neighbors begged Sawan Masih's family to surrender him since they dreaded for their lives. The family let the gathering know that in the event that Sawan Masih expressed anything against Prophet Muhammad (Peace Be Upon Him), they would be quick to rebuff him. A police overseer guaranteed that he made an effort not to make any distress on the grounds that a body of evidence

³⁰ Human Rights Monitor, 2004: A report on the religious minorities in Pakistan, NCJP, p.39

would be recorded against Sawan Masih. During this time, Sawan Masih was cautioned by his sibling not to get back after working all day due to the security risk and crawled under a rock at a relative's home. On 9 March 2013, the police found and captured Sawan Masih, following which the horde scattered. Inhabitants of Joseph Settlement said they were advised by the police to forsake their homes since they couldn't be safeguarded against the crowd. Yet again soon thereafter in the morning, individuals started assembling with mottos asserting the police had not captured Sawan Masih. Numerous occupants left the region after police cautioned them that they gambled being gone after. Cops guaranteed they endeavored to quiet the crowd by taking a couple of them to the police headquarters to affirm that Sawan Masih had without a doubt been captured, however the police left Joseph State unprotected. At the point when the police got back from the station, the horde was crazy and consuming properties. In their articulations submitted to the court as a component of preliminary court procedures against supposed members, the police guarantee they made an honest effort to stop the crowd. The station house official of the nearby police headquarters expressed that the director of police attempted to cause the group to see yet individuals didn't stop and began pelting stones on police.... the group began terminating on the police....The [superintendent] first arranged utilization of poisonous gas and afterward flying terminating. In the meantime, the police were enclosed on three sides and the attackers put the houses on fire.

In any case, separate hearings connecting with a protected request recorded under the steady gaze of the High Court in April 2014 uncovered that the Punjab Police had made a disciplinary move against area's Director of Police, Delegate Administrator and two station house officials for looking for cover in a close by distribution center as opposed to facing the crowd that copied the houses. The Supreme Court issued a statement that if the police officers were not safe in a situation where they themselves took shelter in the warehouse, then nobody would be able to defend the lives and properties of the people living in the Joseph Colony of Lahore. This failure of security agencies clearly shows that; "Fundamental Rights of the citizens of Joseph Colony were not protected as enshrined under Articles 9 and 14 of the Constitution."³¹ An FIR was enlisted by the police against eighty-six (86) named persons along with a large number of different suspects with unknown names. The FIR was enlisted for offenses connecting with revolting with arms,

³¹ International, Amnesty. 2016. *As Good As Dead The Impact of Blasphemy Laws in Pakistan*,. 1 Easton Street London WC1X 0DW, UK.

unlawful gathering, naughtiness causing harm, attack, burglary, endeavored murder, blocking the police from releasing their obligations and obscenity (Segment 295-A, shocking strict sensations of any class). At the hour of composing, as indicated by the data accessible, this case is continuous and nobody is considered as an accused person for attack on the Joseph Colony. The public authority and different NGOs assisted with modifying the houses and inhabitants had the option to return.

An instance of mob violence on the basis of blasphemy charges was also seen in September 2005, when Younis Masih, a Christian person, was alleged with blasphemous charges because he said to his neighbour stopping the *Qawali* loudly. As the neighbour could act according as Younis Masih requested. While in hot exchange of words, Younis Masih tried to ask the connotation of *Qawali* songs, the Muslim friends of neighbour were enraged why a Christian asked the meaning of uttering words. Younis got back, however the following day a group of 30/40 looked for himself and tracked down him in a billiard club. As indicated by APMA, they whipped him with sticks and beat him until he fell on ground, oblivious. At the point when his significant other came to save him, she was additionally beaten and her garments were torn to wears out. The horde left Younis for dead and his significant other and cousin brought him back home. Declarations were made in nearby mosques, impelling Muslims to go after Christian homes on the grounds that a Christian man had supposedly offered irreverent comments about Prophet Mohammad (Peace Be Upon Him). Around 400 Muslims, equipped with sticks, then, at that point, went after Christian homes and chapels, annihilated crosses and discarded Books of scriptures. In excess of 100 Christian families had to escape region and horde encompassed police headquarters where Younis was held and requested he be accused of sacrilege. He was along these lines condemned to death on 30 May, 2007 by Meetings Court in Lahore, and stays in *Kot Lakhpat* Camp Prison. An enormous horde drove by priests answered by yelling trademarks against Younis Masih and compromising anybody engaged with giving security or lawful help to blasphemers. The maltreatment of the sacrilege regulations is one of most orderly and serious issues confronting individuals of Pakistan, Muslims and non-Muslims the same. It is a significant issue, in the light of fact that notwithstanding immediate difficulty its reasons for those erroneously blamed for sacrilege, maltreatment of regulation makes an air of scorn and prejudice in which different

demonstrations of religiously-motivated brutality, separation, terrorizing and oppression become broader.³²

All other minorities women including Christians are especially defenseless. While ladies of all religions face different types of homegrown and erotic viciousness, including danger of honor killings, Christian ladies and little kids seem, by all accounts, to be especially focused on for sexual savagery. Assault is utilized as a weapon to affront, belittle and obliterate minority networks and frequently little kids who are kidnapped and assaulted are then compelled to change over completely to Islam and wed their capturers. On Easter Day 2007, four Muslim persons abducted and gang-raped a girl named *Shaheena Masih* having twelve (12) years of age in Lahore. One of the rapists instructed his collaborators, as narrated by APMA, to be steadfast for raping a minor Christian girl till her death, nobody will find of us because her parents had no capacity to take justice due to their poverty.³³ Even some of younger Christian girls became victims by fanatic rapists younger than Shaheena Masih and Sara Tabasum. As a Muslim man raped and tortured a seven-year-old Christian girl Sharee Komal in Lahore on 29 May 2004. With the pressure of putting false charges of harassment, Christian women are badly sexually abused by fanatic elements in Pakistan.

Most of Christian leaders claim that there are a lot of shortcomings in the implementation of blasphemy laws of Pakistan because it is mostly misused having various reasons like personal vendetta and financial gains, which generally indicate the occurrence of a disturbance in Pakistan general atmosphere. The registration of blasphemous cases brings unusual incidents which put the lives of accused persons as well as their lawyers and judges at risk. In such cases, the arrested people become a symbol of hatred and minorities faced a collective resistance in the form of attacks on the church and their settlements sponsored by fanatic religious Clerics and extremist elements.³⁴ The amendments in Blasphemy Laws introduced by General Zia brought the religious fanaticism and extremism, ultimately resulting into terrorist attacks on the churches and Christian settlements of Lahore. Lacking the public support as General Zia was not elected President of Pakistan, his amended Blasphemy laws did not have popular support from the people of Pakistan which

³² Rogers, Benedict. 2009, *Religion Compass Exchanges*, Blasphemy Laws and the Persecution of Minorities in Pakistan, Christian Solidarity Worldwide. January 26, 2023. <http://religioncompass.wordpress.com>

³³ Ibid.

deprived minorities from their fundamental as well as constitutional rights. Contrary of General Zia, another military ruler of Pakistan, General Pervez Musharraf, gave a hope to minorities about their basic fundamental and constitutional rights. Due to his moderate, fair and sympathetic attitude to the minorities, General Musharraf also convinced Muslims to alter their bigoted mindset about minorities by ending militancy and extremism but all his efforts could not bring the required results. It is because of the misuse of blasphemy laws; the Pakistani Minorities strongly argue for abolishing Blasphemy Law and they have gained a great support from the European as well American states.

Conclusion:

This research paper has explored the contextualization of blasphemy laws in Pakistan with a specific focus on Christian minority in Lahore. Blasphemy laws, rooted in colonial period, continue to impact religious minorities, perpetuating their social and economic marginalization. The minorities leadership continuously demand the abolition of Blasphemy Laws as well as the foreign states also support their stance. As the all-European states have mostly Christian population who have great regard for the Pakistani Christians. As the civilian as well as military rulers of Pakistan tried to portray the positive image of Pakistan by giving due share of minorities in the administrative structure of Pakistan but the law making of Blasphemy introduced by General Zia gave a great disappointment to the minorities of Pakistan. The efforts of General Musharraf created a space for minorities in the Pakistan's constitutional rights but he also remained unsuccessful in this direction. The registration of the blasphemy cases in Lahore with facts and figures show that mostly Muslim clerics use blasphemy laws against their co-religionists. In this way, it can be seen that Muslim versus Muslim cases are larger than those of Pakistan's minorities. International criticism and advocacy efforts emphasize the need for reform, underscoring importance of protecting rights and security of Pakistan's religious minorities.