



United States Department of State

*Assistant Secretary for South
and Central Asian Affairs*

Washington, DC 20520

Dear Mr. Kalra and colleagues,

Thank you for your October 30, 2019, letter expressing concerns about the human rights situation of minority groups in Pakistan. On behalf of Secretary Pompeo, I want to assure you we share your concerns regarding these important issues and consistently prioritize them in our engagements with the Pakistani government. The United States is dedicated to promoting international human rights standards and the freedoms for religious minorities across the globe.

As part of efforts to promote human rights and religious freedom in Pakistan, the State Department, including our Embassy in Islamabad, and Consulates General in Karachi, Lahore, and Peshawar, regularly engage with federal and provincial Pakistani government officials, minority rights activists, civil society organizations, journalists, and those who work to promote religious minority rights. The Department catalogues breaches of religious freedom in our annual International Religious Freedom reports.

We recognize significant challenges remain in ensuring respect for religious freedom in Pakistan, including the enforcement of blasphemy laws, sectarian violence, forced conversions, and issues with school curricula that can promote religious bias. Due to these significant challenges, last year Secretary Pompeo decided to designate Pakistan as a Country of Particular Concern (CPC) under the International Religious Freedom Act for “systematic, ongoing, and egregious violations of religious freedom.” Senior level State Department figures including Ambassador at Large for International Religious Freedom Sam Brownback, Chargé d’Affaires to Pakistan Paul Jones, Special Advisor for Religious Minorities Knox Thames, and I have met with senior officials to discuss the need to combat sectarian violence and ensure the protection of religious and ethnic minorities.

We also share your deep concern regarding enforced disappearances, extrajudicial killings, and other abuses by security force. Our annual Country Reports on Human Rights documents reports of targeted killings and enforced disappearances at length. The report further provides a detailed examination of the state of human rights as Pakistan as a whole. Embassy Islamabad and our Consulates General have consistently engaged with federal and provincial officials and others working to strengthen human rights and the rule of law in Pakistan. We also seek to support greater accountability within Pakistan’s judicial system and security forces through programs funded by the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor (DRL), the Bureau of International Narcotic and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL), Public Affairs, and USAID.

We will continue to press Pakistan to take concrete steps to improve conditions for all its citizens. I hope this information is helpful to you and greatly appreciate your interest and input on this important issue.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Alice Wells". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Alice Wells
Acting Assistant Secretary
Bureau of South and Central Asian Affairs