

March 1, 2023

Ms. Adriana Kugler
Executive Director
World Bank Group
1818 H Street, N.W., MC 13-1307
Washington, DC 20433

Dear Executive Director Kugler,

We write as a diverse coalition of non-governmental organizations and individuals who are scholars, religious leaders, human rights advocates, and civil rights leaders to express our strong concerns regarding Pakistan's human rights record. Specifically, we respectfully urge you to require Pakistan to comply with the World Bank's Gender Policies, and its own human rights obligations under international laws in order to receive financial assistance.

According to the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan, more than 1,000 Hindu and Christian girls, very often minors, are abducted and forcibly converted to Islam every year. Often, after being abducted, these girls are forcibly married to random men, raped, sold into human trafficking rings, or forced into prostitution. These girls suffer intersectional discrimination on the basis of gender, poverty, and ethnic violence and are not protected by Pakistan's institutions.

This is an egregious violation of Sustainable Development Goal-5 that requires the signatory States to *inter-alia* end all forms of discrimination against all women and girls, eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls in the public and private spheres, including trafficking and sexual and other types of exploitation, and eliminate all harmful practices, such as child, early and forced marriage. Pakistan's conduct in not protecting the girls and women of ethnic and religious minorities is not only a violation of its obligations under the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) that it has ratified but also of the World Bank's own Gender Policies.

Disappointingly the World Bank has not carried out a Country Gender Assessment since 2005 let alone pay attention to the atrocities being inflicted on girls and women of religious minorities, extremely vulnerable groups, and indigenous people.

Pakistan has shown a complete and utter disregard for human rights and religious freedom and was recently labeled as a Country of Particular Concern by the U.S. State Department for its "systematic, ongoing, [and] egregious violations of religious freedom" against its religious minorities including Hindus, Sikhs, Christians, Ahmadiyya Muslims, and Shia Muslims.

Religious minorities face systematic persecution and violence, and their religious freedom is severely restricted by the government through discriminatory laws. Pakistan's blasphemy laws have been used to charge and imprison nearly 2,000 people since the laws were incorporated

into the Constitution. Extremists have also used the provisions as a pretext and justification to routinely attack religious minorities. The government's apathy toward large-scale anti-minority violence by radical militant organizations has allowed such groups to operate with impunity.

Finally, Pakistan's public school system and its madrassas continue to use textbooks that indoctrinate students with prejudicial and intolerant views of religious minorities, while glorifying violence and jihad, according to a special report by the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom. It is disappointing that the World Bank's lending for Pakistan's education sector (IDA Credit of US\$400 million in 2019) has not even acknowledged the existence of hate-filled curriculum and severe discrimination against ethnic and religious minorities, particularly of girls.

We firmly believe that defending human rights and protecting minorities and religious freedom must be a critical part of any engagement with Pakistan to ensure its stability. Accordingly, we urge you and the Board of Executive Directors of the World Bank Group to require Pakistan to comply with specific human rights conditions as detailed in the attached report, in order for it to continue receiving international financial assistance.

Thank you for your attention to this urgent matter. Please contact Samir Kalra, Esq., HAF Managing Director at samir@hinduamerican.org or 408.464.8715 should you need additional information or other materials on this subject.

Respectfully,

Samir Kalra, Esq.

Managing Director, Hindu American Foundation

<https://www.hinduamerican.org/>

Aram S. Hamparian

Executive Director, Armenian National Committee of America

<https://anca.org/>

Ashok Karmaker

Bangladesh Hindu Buddhist Christian Unity Council, USA

<https://bhbcuc.org/>

Dr. VS Sampath

Chairman, Global Hindu Temple Network Trust

<https://www.ghtn.in/>

Seth Oldmixon

Liberty South Asia

<https://libertysouthasia.org/>

Peggy Shapiro

National Director of Special Projects, StandWithUs

<https://www.standwithus.com/>

Saghir A Shaikh, Ph.D.

Secretary, World Sindhi Congress, USA

<http://www.worldsindhicongress.org/>