

INTERVENTION

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PAKISTAN

AGENDA ITEM # 2: Legal framework and key concepts

Key Words: Research and Data, census surveys, demographic, socioeconomic, quantitative and qualitative data, education, employment, health, proportional representation, religious and belief diversity

Thank you Madame Chair.

My name is Imran Munawar. I am representing Christian Study Centre, an ecumenical institute based in Rawalpindi, Pakistan.

It is in correlation to draft recommendations 45 thru 48 that I would like to base my intervention on census or population count of the people of Pakistan. According to the UN, Pakistan is among the top most populous countries in the world, with a population growth rate of about 2.0¹ It is important that the government of Pakistan undertakes a fair and accurate census to determine the status of its population.

The last census that took place in Pakistan was in 1998 and showed that 96.28% of the population belonged to the religion of Islam while Non-Muslims constituted 3.7% of the total population.² Minority communities expressed concerns over the statistics provided and highlighted the inaccuracy of the numbers. They have persistently maintained that the system of undertaking the census is at least inconsistent and contains potential fault lines that results in denial of their rights, which begins with an under-estimate of their numbers. Part of the problem is the irregularity of the census, technical lapses and delayed availability of the statistics. There are several factors to be taken into account for understanding the dynamics of population growth in any community and for devising remedial measures.

Pakistan Economic Survey 2012 - 13

² <http://www.ministryrights.org/5615/pakistanipakistan-overview.html>

Post-1971 in the first general elections of Pakistan on July 5, 1977 there were six reserved seats for non-Muslims in the National Assembly of Pakistan. In 1981 census took place and in the General elections of 1985 the reserved seats of minorities were raised to 10'. From then on till now, as shown by the recent elections of 2012, the number is fixed to 10.³ Pakistan is religiously, ethnically and geographically a very rich and diverse country. It is imperative for the state to undertake measures on proper demographic research and data collection of its citizenry and match the findings with proportional political, economic, and social practical steps that helps in strengthening integration of national entities. The Census will give a comprehensive picture of the social and living conditions of our people. Only a census can provide such complete data right down to the smallest area and the results are an essential tool for effective policy, planning and decision making purposes.

One further point that I would like to make in consideration to draft recommendation 47 is while participation in a census is often obligatory, self-identification should be voluntary. Unlike past practices in which there were known cases of biased attitude by some census workers against religious minorities, there should be proper training of census staff to collect the data with integrity and in a professional manner.

Thank you for your attention

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