

FORUM ON MINORITY ISSUES
‘Minorities in the Criminal Justice System’

Provisional Agenda Item III: Minorities and the exercise of police powers (November 24, 2015)
Afternoon Session 15:00-18:00

Oral Statement Presented by: Cecil Shane Chaudhry, Executive Director, Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace, Pakistan

Introductory comments

Thank you Mr. Chairperson.

My name is Cecil Chaudhry and I am a Christian Human Rights Activist from Pakistan, Heading the Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace and I would like to speak on the topic of Minorities and the exercise of Police Powers.

Police in Pakistan often fail to provide protection to members of religious minorities. The Police hostility and bias towards the religious minorities creates an environment in which most non-Muslims fear to seek justice or even file complaints fearing negative repercussions from the Police force.

Causes and Practices

The mass arrests of Christian Minorities that followed in Youhanabad, Lahore, due to the **tragic** lynching of two suspected Muslim members, in the aftermath of the attack on the two Churches this year in March, was a glaring example of the exercise of powers by the police force; **there still remains a wave of extreme fear in the area.**

Was the rule of law not completely violated?

Religious Minorities **when arrested** face numerous challenges at the hands of Police Forces

- 1- Excessive delays by Police in registering the First Information Report, up to 3 months after the arrests
- 2- Use of 3rd degree torture against the arrested minorities
- 3- Use of abusive language and religious bias during their interrogation by the Police
- 4- Female family members visiting prisoners more than often face harassment by the **jail staff**.
- 5- Juvenile victims are **harassed/abused** by the authorities both **(physically and mentally)**

These points are a clear example of the violation of **Article 25** of the **Constitution of Pakistan** which states that all the citizens are equal before the law and ensures equal protection for all citizens. It also is a violation of **Article 27** of the **International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights** and the **Universal Declaration on Human Rights**.

Recommendations

Mr. Chairperson, Citing Draft Recommendation 28 of The Forum on Minority Issues, we present the following recommendations:

- That the **State of Pakistan** should introduce new policies and regulations to police and law enforcement authorities to ensure fair treatment towards minorities

- The State should Depute a trained and qualified Human Rights Officer at Police stations to ensure fair and impartial treatment in accordance with Human Rights standards for all complainants
- **Lastly the Rule of Law must** be implemented at all costs to protect all citizens from the hostile and negative attitude of the Police Force in Pakistan

Mr. Chairperson, in the end despite all the hardships and threats, our struggle continues; we stand firm and committed with the resolve for a just, tolerant and equitable Pakistan.

I thank you for this time!