



**Mr. Olaf Skoog**  
**EU Special Representative for Human Rights**  
European External Action Service  
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Strasbourg, 22 January 2025

**Subject: your visit to Pakistan and our concerns regarding forced marriages, blasphemy laws, religious freedom and EU funding of Islamic school books**

Honourable Mr. Skoog,

It has come to our attention that you will travel to Pakistan by the end of January in your capacity as EU Special Representative for Human Rights. We, undersigned Members of the European Parliament (EP) and co-Chairs of the EP Intergroup on Religious Freedom, Belief or Conscience would like to raise our concerns with regards to Pakistan on the following specific topics:

#### **Religious persecution and blasphemy charges**

As you are undoubtedly aware, religious minorities such as Christians are not safe in Pakistan. Pakistan is listed as 8th on the World Watch List<sup>1</sup> of Open Doors, the annual ranking of the 50 countries where Christians face the most extreme persecution. Pakistan's blasphemy laws target minority groups. A quarter of all blasphemy accusations target Christians, who only make up 1.8 percent of the population. Blasphemy laws carry a death sentence, and although the death sentence is seldom carried out, people accused of blasphemy are vulnerable for attacks or murder by mobs. For example, a Christian mother of four, Mrs. Shagufta Kiran, was recently sentenced to death on a blasphemy charge. Please find enclosed two country reports on Pakistan by Aid to the Church in Need (ACN) and Christian Solidarity Worldwide (CSW).

#### **Forced marriages of young girls from religious minorities**

Human right groups estimate that several hundred minor girls of religious minorities are forcibly married in Pakistan and forcibly converted to Islam to protect the Islamic abductors from prosecution, as marriage with minor girls is legal under sharia law. Please find enclosed a report by ADF International on forced marriages and conversion in Pakistan, listing the cases of for example Reeha Saleem, Saba Sattar, Sadaf Khan, Kajal, Maryam Anwar and many more.

#### **EU funding of Islamic school books**

The European Union invested approximately 100 to 150 million in education in Pakistan between 2016 and 2024. The EU funded school materials are not compatible with the European fundamental freedoms and values as the material fails to be inclusive towards religious minorities and increases discrimination and extremism. We have included a report on the EU funded Pakistani Single National Curriculum by the Sallux foundation.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.opendoors.org/en-US/persecution/countries/pakistan/>



We ask you to you raise these concerns with the Pakistani authorities during your visit and to urge the authorities to act accordingly. We wish you a safe trip.

**Co-chairs the European Parliament Intergroup on the Freedom of Religion, Belief and Conscience**

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Miriam Lexmann".

**MEP Miriam Lexmann**

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Bert-Jan Ruissen".

**MEP Bert-Jan Ruissen**