



Do you know our suffering?
2 Timothy 3:10–12

PAKISTAN

Population: 225 million

Capital: Islamabad

Form of government: Federal parliamentary republic

Head of state: President Asif Ali Zardari

Religions: Muslim 95.2%, Christian 2.0%, Hindu 1.4%, all other religions 1.4%

Gina A. Zurlo, ed. World Christian Database (Leiden/Boston: Brill, accessed August 2026).

Blasphemy laws and mob violence

Pakistan is officially known as the Islamic Republic of Pakistan. Established in 1947 as a homeland for Muslims following the end of British rule, Islam remains the state religion. Pakistan's blasphemy laws carry severe penalties, including the possibility of the death penalty. Christians and other religious minorities are particularly vulnerable to false accusations, and those accused often face intimidation, violence, and even mob attacks before their cases reach the courts.

One of the best-known cases is that of Asia Bibi, a Christian woman who was accused of blasphemy in 2009 following a dispute with co-workers over drinking water. She was sentenced to death in 2010 and spent many years in prison. After extensive legal appeals, Pakistan's Supreme Court acquitted her in 2018. Following widespread protests against the decision, she was forced to leave her homeland and was eventually granted refuge in Canada.

Many other Christians continue to suffer under blasphemy accusations, which are sometimes used to settle personal disputes or target vulnerable members of minority communities. Some spend years in prison awaiting justice, while their families live under fear and uncertainty.

In August 2023, the Christian community in Jaranwala experienced one of the most devastating attacks on Christians in recent years. Following allegations that two Christians had desecrated the Quran, mobs attacked the community, damaging or destroying 26 churches, more than 100 Christian homes, and a local school. Many Christian families were left traumatized and displaced. Despite the scale of the destruction, no one has been held accountable.

Abductions and forced marriages

Christian girls and young women in Pakistan are particularly vulnerable to abduction, forced conversion to Islam, and coerced marriage, often to much older Muslim men. Families frequently face immense challenges in seeking justice, while victims may endure isolation, exploitation, and lives marked by fear and loss of freedom.

One recent example is Maria Shahbaz, a 13-year-old Christian girl who was taken from her family home in July 2025. Her parents have continued to seek her safe return after reporting that she was forcibly converted and married against her will. In March 2026, Pakistan's Federal Constitutional Court ruled against her parents, concluding that Maria was of "mature age" largely because she looks older than her 13 years. The case has become a source of deep concern for Christian communities and human rights advocates.

Economic and social marginalization

Many Christians in Pakistan come from socially and economically disadvantaged backgrounds. A significant number are descended from communities that have historically faced discrimination and exclusion, the "untouchable" class. As a result, many Christian families have limited access to education, employment opportunities, and social mobility. Christians are often concentrated in low-paid and difficult jobs, including sanitation work and other forms of manual labor.

Many Christian families are also vulnerable to bonded labor, particularly in industries such as brick kilns. Workers may take out small loans to meet urgent family needs, but high interest rates and unfair labor practices can leave them trapped in cycles of debt. Some families have spent generations trying to repay obligations that continue to grow, leaving them with little hope of freedom and exposing them to exploitation and abuse.

Pakistan is home to more than 20,000 brick kilns, where many vulnerable families struggle under harsh working conditions. For some Christian believers, the burden of debt has been passed down from one generation to the next, creating a cycle of poverty that is difficult to escape.

Lack of representation

Christian politicians are not elected directly by Christian voters. Instead, political parties select Christian representatives through the reserved-seat system. This means that political parties choose which representatives will serve in Parliament. Unfortunately, these representatives often face pressure to follow their party's priorities and directions, rather than advocating for the needs and concerns of the Christian community. As a result, the interests of political parties can take priority over the needs of Christians.

While Christians are the largest religious minority in Pakistan, the seats reserved for religious minorities are not specifically allocated to Christians. Representatives from other minority religious communities, even those with very small populations, can also be selected to fill these seats. This can further limit the representation of the Christian community in Parliament.

There is hope!

In recent years, there have been opportunities for constructive engagement with government officials and community leaders in Pakistan. The World Evangelical Alliance has been working with the Evangelical Alliance of Pakistan (EAP) to develop interfaith peace committees that are trained to de-escalate conflict before mob violence erupts. The EAP has also provided training to help Christians how to avoid blasphemy charges. Affiliated ministries have equipped families with practical strategies to protect girls who may be at risk of abduction and forced conversion, while others have worked to secure the freedom of Christians trapped in bonded labor in brick kilns. These initiatives are bringing hope and practical support to vulnerable communities and helping Pakistani Christians face ongoing challenges with resilience and faith.

WE PRAY

- For our brothers and sisters in Pakistan who faithfully follow Christ despite discrimination, false accusations, and violence.
- For young Christian girls at risk of abduction, forced conversion, and exploitation. Pray for their protection, for strength and comfort for their families, for justice in the courts, and for the restoration of those whose lives have been deeply affected by these abuses.
- For Christian families living in poverty, bonded labor, and discrimination. Pray that they would know God's provision, protection, and hope, and that opportunities for education, employment, and justice would help break cycles of exploitation and poverty.
- For Christians who have suffered violence, loss, and persecution in Pakistan. Ask God to bring healing to those living with trauma and fear, to strengthen their faith, and to fill them with His peace and hope.
- For healing, justice, and reconciliation in communities affected by anti-Christian violence. Ask God to strengthen His church in Pakistan and to enable believers to respond with wisdom, courage, and Christ-like love.
- That Christians will be able to elect their own representatives in Pakistan elections. Pray that Christian representatives will have the freedom and courage to advocate for the needs and concerns of the Christian community, and that political parties will support fair and meaningful representation of religious minorities in Parliament.
- That Pakistan's government will enact and enforce legal reforms that protect Christians and other religious minorities from discrimination, false accusations, violence, and forced conversions. Ask God to raise up leaders committed to justice, human dignity, and the protection of all citizens.