



**Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organization (UNPO)
Communication
Universal Periodic Review: Pakistan**

Sindhi People

Sindhi people constitute approximately 23% of the population of Pakistan, located primarily in the Sindh province along the Indus River Valley. The Sindhi have a distinct culture and a distinct spoken and written language with about 40 million users. Among the Sindhi, Sufism is the most prevalent religion. Historically, Sindh province has been recognized as a separate political territory, practicing territorial autonomy under British colonial rule. During the Pakistani-Indian separation, the Sindhi agreed to join Pakistan under the promise of the Pakistan Resolution of 1940 that Sindh would remain an “autonomous and sovereign” state within a Pakistani federation. Since that time, Pakistan has come under military authoritarian rule, which has meant a loss of provincial autonomy for Sindh.

Suppression and Oppression in Sindh

In the last half century since the creation of Pakistan, the Sindhi people have faced many hardships as a minority ethnic group in the new Islamic state. Over a third of the Sindhi population has been displaced, particularly those of Hindu faith, and more face such human rights abuses as forced bonded labor. Bonded labor figures have reached as high as 1.8 million people across Pakistan. Non-Muslims, such as Sindhi Sufis and Hindus have been targeted under heresy laws in Pakistan, and Hindus in particular are targets of discrimination, including bonded labor and disappearances. Islamic law has an important role in the Pakistani legal state, despite the presence of other religious and culture groups. This has led to much discrimination, particularly towards Hindus. Sindhi language and culture has been suppressed in favor of Urdu and Islamic based culture

The Sindhi people have reallocation of their resources and lands to non-Sindhies as compensation for friends and allies of the Pakistani ruling class. Profits from the resources have been allocated to these new owners, rather than to the Sindhi people and workers. While Sindh contributes approximately 67% of federal revenue for the state, the rate of return is under 22% through federal spending. This has left over half of the Sindhi population in poverty, while the region remains the most resource rich in Pakistan. The Sindhi people have been denied ownership rights of resources including fisheries, agriculture, and energy sources, which has denied them their right of livelihood as traditional means of income are stolen from them.

Environmental Degradation

The River Indus runs through the center of Sindh emptying into the Arabian Sea in the south. As a result of the geography, the irrigated river valley has allowed for a fertile agriculture. Sindh has historically been abundant in natural resources and enjoyed a favorable economy. Developments along the river in the Punjab province to the north of Sindh have greatly affected the fertility of the land in Sindh, contributing to the degradation of both the environment and the economy. Both the Kalabagh Dam and the Thal Canal projects have diverted water and silt away from Sindh causing massive environmental devastation to the agriculturally dependent region. Because of these mega projects, the Sindh region receives 80% less than its due share of water and has suffered a changing ecosystem including a 90% decline in mangrove forests, which were essential to the protection of land and villages from seawater. The loss of mangroves has resulted in a loss of 159 villages, approximately 1.2 million acres of agricultural land and widespread draught from the salination.

According to the United Nations' Rio Declaration of 1992, "*flood management, water supply, power, and irrigation needs must be obtained and provided through informed and sustainable processes*". Although this is a declarative document and not an enforceable treaty, the Rio Declaration and other documents that advocate sustainable development are important elements in ensuring fundamental human rights such as the right to livelihood, health, and security. "*The right to development must be fulfilled so as to equitably meet developmental and environmental needs of present and future generations,*" stresses the Declaration.

Violence against Women

Traditionally, a Sindhi woman has been lauded for her strength and independence, and there existed equality between men and women. The cultural role of Sindhi women contrasts significantly from the Islamic laws in place in Pakistan. Over time, the traditions of honor killings have become common practice. In 2005, more than 3000 women were killed due to some form of violence against women, including honor killings and domestic abuse. Today, half of all honor killings that take place in Pakistan occur in Sindh.

In 1979, two years after the creation of the Islamic based Hudood ordinance, Pakistan became party to the the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. According to Article 2, Pakistan agreed to "*take all appropriate measures, including legislation, to modify or abolish existing laws, regulations, customs and practices which constitute discrimination against women; [and] to repeal all national penal provisions which constitute discrimination against women.*" Though the controversial Hudood ordinance has been repealed by the Women's Protection Bill of 2006, making the process for filing criminal charges of rape more realistic, only an estimated one-third of all rapes are reported and often the police are implicated in the act. The original Hudood laws regarding adultery remain, however, and an estimated 70% of women in jails are awaiting trials for adultery-related Hudood offences. While most of the women tried under the ordinance are acquitted, the stigma of adultery often ruins their lives, and leads to cases of honor killings.

Freedom of Assembly

Article 16 of the Constitution of Pakistan provides for freedom "*to assemble peacefully and without arms subject to any reasonable restrictions imposed by law in the interest of public order,*" and the freedom of association. The government generally observed these rights, but with some restrictions. While the law provides for this right, in practice, the government has placed selective restrictions on the right to assemble and sometimes refused permits for processions in urban areas. Ahmadis have been prohibited from holding any conferences or gatherings since 1984, and other ethnic and religious groups are often denied permits to gather. On August 22, approximately 2,000 teachers of the Sindh Employees Alliance protested in front of the Karachi Press Club against the government's ban on teachers' unions. According to the AHRC, police used teargas and batons to disperse the demonstration. Police arrested 45 teachers and injured six.

UNPO would like the United Nations Human Rights Council to take into consideration all the aforementioned abuses of human rights in Pakistan, especially concerning ethnic minorities such as the Sindhi, and non-Muslims. Discrimination is ingrained in the Pakistani legal and societal structure, favoring the ruling party's ethnic group while suppressing others. UNPO stresses that the United Nations Human Rights Council should work to improve the standard of human rights in Pakistan on behalf of the Sindhi people, especially the rights of women, the freedom of assembly, and the right to livelihood through sustainable development.