Promoting Freedom of Belief and Challenging Religious Discrimination in Pakistan

Pakistan is home to multi-religious and diverse cultural identities. It comprises of a strong multi-ethnic background. The rights of religious minorities are often discussed and embroiled with complexity. This complexity is defined as a situation where on the one hand the constitution of Pakistan defines and lays emphasis on safeguarding rights of minorities and on the other hand the role of majority to sustain and uphold the minority rights presents a contrasting picture. This complex phenomenon can be illustrated through historical references, showing that attempts have been made to impose and promote cultural characteristics and norms representing a specific mindset. These cultural norms deviate from the constitution and the international commitments signed by the state to avoid marginalisation of religious minorities in Pakistan.

Despite the state’s efforts to protect the rights of minorities both by the military dictatorship and democratic government regimes, a sense of insecurity prevails among the minorities. The constitution fails to protect their identity in situations where misspell of a single word by a non-Muslim girl can result into a blasphemous issue. Despite being a signatory to international conventions and mechanisms aimed at securing the rights of minorities, Pakistan has not been able to provide promising environment to the minorities.

The proposed panel aims to illustrate the state of religious minorities in Pakistan. It will further present vision 2020 for the policy interventions required in light of the constitutional and international commitments made by the Government of Pakistan.

This panel will also suggest creative and progressive solutions for minorities based on suggestions of peaceful and mutually beneficial coexistence.

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