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Balancing Faith and Justice: Legal Measures against Extremism in Pakistan

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ABSTRACT

Religious extremism is a ravaging and widespread menace in the world. The abuse of blasphemy law and mob justice in Pakistan is a life-threatening ordeal, and many are displaced. The present paper discusses the lynching incident of Mashal Khan in 2017 and the killing of a Sri-Lankan national, Priyantha Kumara, in 2021. The two cases illustrate the threats of extremism, apathy within an institution, and how religion has been used to advance personal or political interests. They accompany the cries of those at risk with appeals for international protection and demand a specific judicial system that would provide justice on time and be fair. The article encourages the host states and international organizations to embrace such laws and acknowledge the justifiable fears and rights of affected people.

Introduction: The Religious Extremism Specter in Pakistan

In Pakistan, religious extremism has changed into a socio-political crisis, disguised as the outcry of morality. It feeds on vigilante violence, especially in the name of blasphemy. Whenever a person is accused, whether the allegation is true or false, they are usually attacked brutally by the people, and justice is hardly ever administered. The blasphemy law, particularly Sections 295-298 of the Pakistan Penal Code, is imprecise, abusive, and hardly results in fair trials. False allegations, which are mostly founded on rumor, have led to lynching that deprive people of their defense, as well as dignity and life.

It is not just an academic article; it is an appeal to justice, reform, and pity. It addresses the listeners who have lost their relatives, socially boycotting them, or fearing persecution due to religious extremism. The article sheds light on the causes of extremism in Pakistan by discussing the high-profile cases of Mashal Khan and Priyantha Kumara and holding the argument that legal reforms and international

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assistance are the only means to avoid this kind of cruelty.

The Mashal Khan Case: An Icon of Injustice and Blind Religious Frenzy

Journalism student Mashal Khan of Abdul Wali Khan University in Mardan was brutally lynched by a group of other students and employees on 13 April 2017. He was accused of blasphemy, a hypothetical word that is usually punishable by death in Pakistan. As a matter of fact, there was no blasphemy. Later probes found Mashal not guilty, and the allegations were false, and the murder was premeditated.

Mashal had publicly denounced corruption in the universities, increased tuition, and inefficiency in the administration. His activism challenged established vested powers, and the blasphemy charge was a handy tool. He was beaten by the mob, whose rumors and religious passion were in full blast, with savage brutality. The judicial reaction was not strong despite the national and international outrage. A single individual was sentenced to death, and some others were found guilty, but the real social and institutional issues that enabled the lynching went unnoticed on a wider scale. The poor and slow justice system was disappointing to Mashal, as indicated by his grieving parents.

The example of Mashal Khan represents the possibility of equating intellectual opposition to heresy and permitting the loss of lives on the basis of unproven accusations. Even the staff of the university, as the alleged carriers of the knowledge, engaged in the lynching, and this shows the extent to which extremist ideas infiltrate Pakistani society.

The Sialkot Lynching of Priyantha: The Delicateness of Foreign Lives in a Unfriendly Climate

On 3 December 2021, in Sialkot, Punjab, Sri-Lankan factory manager Priyanaya-Kumara Diyawadana was violently lynched and permitted to be burned by a group of more than 800 men. The supposed misdemeanor of taking down a poster with religious text in renovation was a smokescreen. Workplace resentment, religious ignorance, and incitement of mobs were the actual motives.

Priyantha was not a Pakistani like Mashal is. The fear of the safety of foreign workers and religious minorities in Pakistan was a burning question after of his murder. The violence of the mob was appalling, and the very fact that offenders

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filmed and distributed their activities in the social network demonstrated that there is a culture of impunity and distorted pride based on religiously motivated phobia. The Anti-Terrorism Court in Lahore ordered that six men be sentenced to death, nine to life imprisonment, and 72 others received a two-year jail term. But no judgment would ever be able to offset the psychological harm to the victim and the social fabric as a whole. To refugees, particularly the minority or progressive types, the case of Priyananta brings out the true risk of false charges and homicide.

Legal and Institutional Weaknesses: Why Reforms are So Important

The Pakistani judicial system, based on the democratic and Islamic model, has not been able to protect the citizens of the nation against the religious mobs. The blasphemy laws have no protection against false crimes and no defense against investigations. Police comforters tend to be on the side of mobs either because of fear or due to conspiracy, and the judges are reluctant to pass just verdicts because they are threatened.

The religiously motivated cases of violence and blasphemy need special courts urgently. These courts are expected to be free of religious and political ties, speedy trials to avoid prolonged pre-trial detentions, witness protection programs, forensic and digital evidence to prove the truth, and fairness by international observers.

Such courts should be upholding the rule of law and human dignity so that religious sentiments are not exploited to serve personal vested interests. Developing this framework would do justice to the victims, such as Mashal and Priyantha, and make the state a trusted institution again.

The Legal and Social Environment: A Storm of Steel

The laws on blasphemy in Pakistan, particularly Section 295 of the Penal Code, are ambiguous and generally undefined. Initially meant to stop hate speech and ensure harmony, they are currently used as an ordinary abuse tool to score points or to silence an opposition. Knowing that an accusation usually does not imply any evidence, and the accused are meted out with violence before they can even prove their innocence.

Law enforcement departments are either in collaboration or helpless. In the Mashal and Priyantha incidents, police were at the scene, but they did not take any

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constructive or defensive action. The rule of law becomes a secondary concern as public sentiment, fueled by radical clerics and social, becomes more heated. Judicial procedures to deal with such volatile cases are also lacking. Religious groups put pressure on the general courts, which results in the justice being delayed or compromised. Pakistan is in dire need of an independent system of a special court, which will administer quick justice in blasphemy cases, vindicate innocents, and remind the state of its justice system, and curb mob rule.

The Need for International Recognition and Refugee Protection

These instances depict that even those people who are vulnerable to religious violence in Pakistan are not secure even in the institutions of the society or even in workplaces. Protection is a lifeline to many people rather than an opportunity. To gain protection, there must be an international status on systemic persecution that passes as religious morality.

Protection seekers often cite cases like Mashal Khan and Priyantha Kumara as evidence of credible fear. Immigration tribunal and refugee panels need to comprehend the dynamics of the law of blasphemy in Pakistan, understand that such allegations are usually false but deadly, understand the pervasiveness of extremist ideological placement, and assess the inability of the state to defend dissidents and minorities.

This sociopolitical background needs to be taken into account by the UN High Commissioner for Refugees and countries that can provide protection to international claims of protection. Religious extremism is commonly perpetrated against victims and even potential victims in Pakistan with constant fear of false allegations; psychological trauma after being victims of mob violence; systemic discrimination in education, employment, and in public; and failure of the state to protect them and effectively prosecute the perpetrators.

That being the case, people who leave Pakistan due to religious persecution, particularly those who are charged with blasphemy or are against extremism, should be eligible for the protection of the 1951 Refugee Convention. The reason is that their fear is grounded in the societal and legal framework of the country.

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Cultural Changes and Counter-Extremist Actions: Education, Media, and Civil Society

Pakistan requires a cultural revolution to eliminate extremism on top of legal reforms. There must be tolerance, critical thinking, and respect for human life in education rather than dogma. The media should not be sensational, should uphold peace and pluralism, and should take the initiative of countering extremist stories. The civil society organizations should also be enabled to safeguard at-risk people and counter propaganda.

The religious scholars and the community should unite to condemn the misuse of blasphemy laws. Both the Constitution and the Islamic values of the Pakistani nation ascribe the values of justice and mercy, which do not go together with mob lynchings.

Conclusion: Justice Delayed is Justice Denied

The murders of Mashal Khan and Priyantha Kumara are not isolated cases, but they are a part of the systemic crisis institutionalized around religious intolerance, judicial inefficiency, and social complicity. So many remain in terror, are gagged, or driven out.

The article calls upon the Pakistani government, the international community, and civil society to act in practice, rather than with words. It requires the creation of specialized courts to handle religious violence, fast, and equitable processes of the law and that nations should open their doors to those who are in need of protection, because it is a right and not a crime to run away.

A combination of justice, compassion, education, and international solidarity is the only way that religious extremism can be defeated. It is only at this point that we can wish to create a world where no one is murdered after being honest, inquiring, or having different faiths.

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