



Written by [James Murphy](#) on August 21, 2023

Christian Churches Vandalized, Homes Burned in Violent Muslim Reaction to Alleged Blasphemy in Pakistan

On Sunday, in Pakistan's Punjab Province, Christians held services in buildings that had experienced violent riots only days before. Muslim gangs numbering in the thousands had vandalized and set fire to at least 21 churches in the area after claims that pages of a Quran had been torn out and, supposedly, were defaced with blasphemous content scrawled across them.

At least 160 have been arrested in the incident, which occurred in the Christian colony in the city of Jaranwala on Wednesday. Reportedly, the Muslim mobs, armed with iron rods, sticks, bricks, knives, and daggers, rampaged for 10 hours before police stopped them. Police deny the claim, saying that the damage would have been far worse had they not been there to intervene.



AP Images

Christians outside home in Jaranwala, Pakistan

Two Christian men — Rocky Masih and Raja Masih — who are accused of the blasphemy were also arrested. If found guilty, the penalty for blasphemy in Pakistan is death. The blasphemy incident is said to be “under investigation,” although some Pakistani Christians cannot imagine such a thing actually happening.

“We, as Pakistani Christians, cannot even imagine to disrespect any holy book, place or religious sentiments of other faiths,” [said](#) Father Jamil Albert, head of the Franciscan Commission for Interfaith and Interreligious Dialogue in Pakistan

Among the sites damaged in the anti-Christian unrest are the Salvation Army Church, the Saint Paul Catholic Church, and dozens of Christian homes. A Christian graveyard was also desecrated in the violence.

Some claim that the violence was instigated by followers of Tehrik-e-Labaik Pakistan (TLP) an extremist sect of Sunni Muslims. TLP has clashed with police over the past several weeks, with at least seven policemen killed in clashes with the sect. The group's rallying cry has been “death to blasphemers.”

TLP has denied that they were involved with the attacks, claiming that their members were actually assisting police.

Among the sites attacked were the Salvation Army Church, Saint Paul Catholic Church, and scores of family homes of alleged Christians.

“They broke the windows, doors, and took out fridges, sofas, chairs, and other household items to be burned,” [said Yassir Bhatti](#), one of the Christians who was forced to leave his home.



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The mob was allegedly spurred on via loudspeaker from a nearby mosque.

Christian leaders in Pakistan lamented their “second class” status in the Islamic nation.

“We, as a Christian community, have time and again displayed our fidelity to the nation of Pakistan, yet incidents like the burning of Christian homes in Gojra, Shantinagar, Joseph Colony, and now Jaranwala, show that we are in reality second-class citizens who can be terrorized and frightened at will,” [said Archbishop Benny Travas](#) of Karachi.

“We have once again been confronted with open hatred and uncontrollable rage shown towards the Christian community,” Travas added.

He further lamented a government that promises much to the Christian minority while allowing atrocities to occur over and over again.

“Once again, we have the same old condemnation and visits by the politicians and other government officials expressing their solidarity with the Christian community and promises that ‘justice will be done,’ but in reality, nothing materializes, and all is forgotten,” he said.

On Open Doors’ World Watch List, Pakistan is [listed](#) as the seventh most dangerous place in the world to practice Christianity.

“Christians in Pakistan are considered second-class citizens and face discrimination in every aspect of life. Jobs that are seen as low, dirty and degrading are reserved for Christians by the authorities, who continue to push them to the margins of society,” Open Doors reports.

“In addition to social hostility, Christians also experience apathy from the authorities who should protect them. The police force is more interested in appeasing local strongmen than implementing the law and protecting minorities,” the site adds.

While we in America complain that sometimes our pastors go on too long or that the music service is lacking in excitement or we don’t like a certain deacon’s demeanor, we would do well to look to Pakistan. In the midst of a society that hates them and obviously has it out for them, Pakistan’s Christians meet in burned-out churches to celebrate the Savior, because their faith tells them it’s still a better path than the one chosen by the Muslims who committed violence upon them. It makes our piddly little complaints seem quite small by comparison.



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