

“IT WAS THE WORST OUTBREAK OF PERSECUTION AGAINST CHRISTIANS IN PAKISTAN’S HISTORY”

Hundreds of Christian homes and several church buildings were attacked and destroyed

16th August 2023 was a very sad day for Christians in Pakistan. A mob made up of hundreds of Islamist fanatics in Faisalabad carried out one of the cruellest attacks of anti-Christian persecution that Pakistan has ever witnessed. In Jaranwala, they vandalised, threw stones and burned hundreds of homes of Christian families and nearly 20 churches, desecrating tombs, Bibles, images and crosses.

From the loudspeakers of the mosques,

they called on the local population to “go out and kill” the Christians, after rumours began to spread that a man and his son had disrespected the Quran by placing their photographs on its pages.

The terrified Christians of the city fled en masse for their lives and managed to spend the night in the sugar cane fields. The next morning, the few who returned desperately in search of food saw how everything had been destroyed, down to the last light bulb. A Christian community leader, who is not being named for security reasons, told ACN that many of

the Christians returning to Jaranwala were horrified by the extent of the damage done to their homes and were sleeping on the floor without electric light and unable to cook food.

The local Church is making continuous efforts to provide food packages, soap and other health care items, cups, plates and other basic household essentials as this recent wave of persecution has left hundreds of families devastated, with homes destroyed and lives shattered. ✝

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URGENT HELP IS NEEDED

Help today our persecuted brethren in Pakistan

“The situation is terrifying. Christians are very scared. Please pray for our people, pray that their lives are protected. They don’t know what to do or where to go,” said Fr Abid Tanveer, Vicar General of the Diocese of Faisalabad.

“I ask for your prayers and call for action and solidarity with the families affected by this terrible act,” said Bishop Joseph Arshad, president of the Catholic Episcopal Conference of Pakistan.

We, at the Malta office, join other ACN offices in asking for your collaboration to immediately send emergency aid so that our Christian brothers and sisters in Pakistan can survive and return to their homes. Your donation will help them remain strong in their Faith, in the face of hatred and extreme violence of those who are determined to eradicate Christianity from Pakistan.

Christians in Pakistan barely represent 2% of the total population and, just because they are Christians, they are considered second-class citizens, which is why they are forced to take on the most degrading jobs in society in order to support their families.

Discrimination, false accusations of

blasphemy, kidnappings of women and girls, and forced conversions to Islam haunt their lives – on a daily basis. They are seriously threatened by those who are determined to eradicate any sign of Christianity from the country.

Their lives are in danger at every moment as they feel ignored and unprotected by the authorities. Pakistani Christians face this harsh reality every

day, heroically and without giving up their belief. But they need help to remain firm in their Faith and to guarantee the permanence of Christianity in their country.

Your support can provide them with the essentials they need to survive and give them the chance and also the hopes and strength to rebuild. 🙏



A Religious Sister of the Daughters of St Paul Congregation, visiting and praying with victims of the attack in their torched home



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HELPING AFFECTED FAMILIES REBUILD THEIR LIVES

Over 460 Christian families are in need of daily food and other emergency provisions

With the kind support of our benefactors, ACN wants to provide emergency support to the victims of anti-Christian riots that took place in Jaranwala, in the district of Punjab, Pakistan. The support package for 464 families will include immediate relief items, renovation of homes and the purchase of vehicles for those whose livelihoods were destroyed in the attacks.

Miraculously, no Christians were killed in the attacks, but hundreds of families had to flee and lost all their possessions. Now they are being forced to stay with relatives or even out in the surrounding fields.

The local diocese has identified 464 families that are in more desperate need and has devised a plan to provide them first with immediate assistance, and then with the goods and help necessary to rebuild their lives.

"The lives of these people are in grave danger, as they struggle to survive amidst immense hardship," said Bishop Indrias Rehmat of Faisalabad to ACN.

The items required for the families include basic necessities such as clothes, kitchen appliances, bedding and


mattresses, stationary for school children and even rickshaws and motorcycles for drivers and delivery boys whose vehicles were destroyed in the attacks. They need these vehicles as the livelihood of their families depend on them.

Bishop Indrias requested financial assistance from ACN. On its part, ACN announce that it will be launching a relief project to help the Christian community in the most tangible ways. We aim to see these 464 families in particular, getting back on their feet, at the earliest possible," said Marco Mencaglia, ACN's international

director of projects.

"If needed, we are ready to consider future support for the renovation of totally burnt down homes and church buildings in Jaranwala," he added.

"We look forward to collaborating with ACN to alleviate the great suffering that these faithful but unfortunate Christians are enduring every day, nowadays.

Please allow me to extend our heartfelt gratitude to ACN's benefactors for their attention and cooperation in this matter," concluded Bishop Indrias in his urgent communication with ACN. 





BREAKING DOWN PREJUDICE BY PROMOTING EDUCATION

The remains of the National Marian Shrine in Mariamabad, one of Pakistan's oldest Catholic settlements

Samuel, a computer science student, has high hopes for the future. But behind the smile there exists a huge courageous effort. He has come under enormous pressure to abandon Christianity and convert to Islam. Samuel, who helps as a cameraman for Pakistan's Catholic TV Station, told ACN: "One time when I refused, a group came over and beat me - but I told them I would not give up my belief in Jesus."

ACN is helping young Christians across Pakistan with scholarships so they can pay college and university fees. Education is the key to breaking the cycle of poverty and discrimination that keeps Christians poor and disadvantaged.

ACN is determined to help people like Samuel and many others who are determined to do their part as responsible and diligent citizens in society and lift their community out of misery and penury.

By promoting and funding education of determined Pakistani Christians, ACN is speaking up for the voiceless, standing up for the oppressed and breaking down

prejudice. A marked characteristic of Pakistani Christians is that though they are discriminated against and under constant pressure to abandon their Christian faith, they are never ashamed to be Christian.

Join us in empowering young Christians, like Samuel, through education. Together, we can break the cycle of poverty and discrimination.

Please offer whatever you can to help them. They are being tested in their Faith and we are being tested in our love. ✝



Samuel, a young Catholic from Lahore, was beaten up for refusing to deny Christ



THE SHOCKING TRUTH ABOUT BEING A CHRISTIAN IN PAKISTAN...

DID YOU KNOW?

✓ **In Pakistan, a conviction for even allegedly insulting the Muslim Prophet Mohammad carries the death sentence (Articles 295C Pakistan's Penal Code)**

An alleged desecration of the Qur'an is punishable by life imprisonment (Articles 295B Pakistan's Penal Code).

✓ **Abductions, sexual violence, forced religious conversion, and human trafficking continue to plague Pakistan**

Every year up to 1,000 Christian and Hindu women and girls, aged between 12 and 25, are abducted and many are forced to convert to Islam and marry a Muslim

✓ **Christians in Pakistan struggle to find work**

Many destitute Christians in Pakistan's brick kilns are trapped in a cycle of bonded labour, essentially a type of modern slavery. They face the impossible task of repaying loans taken out to buy food and other basic necessities.

Please remember them in your daily prayers. ✝

