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**Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil,
political, economic, social and cultural rights,
including the right to development**

Written statement* submitted by Stichting Global Human Rights Defence, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[5 February 2024]

* Issued as received, in the language of submission only.



Forced Conversions of Sindhi Hindu Girls in Sindh, Pakistan

The Stitching Global Human Rights Defence reports a grave human rights violation to the United Nations Human Rights Council – the rampant and escalating issue of forced conversions in Sindh, Pakistan. This heinous practice predominantly targets non-Muslim minorities, significantly affecting the Hindu community, which comprises approximately 1.6-2.9 percent of Pakistan's overall population, with around 90 percent residing in rural Sindh.

In Sindh, forced conversions have taken on a disturbingly systematic nature, with reports indicating that, in Pakistan on average, 1,000 women and girls from religious minority communities, predominantly between the ages of 12-25, are kidnapped and forcibly converted to Islam each year. The statistics shows that Sindhi Hindu girls constitute the largest group suffering this atrocity. This figure includes over 20 Hindu girls who are kidnapped and converted each month in Sindh. These abductions are often followed by forced marriages and falsification of legal documents to legitimize these acts.

The situation is particularly dire in districts like Sanghar and Tharpakar and cities such as Ghotki, Sanghar, and Jacobabad in Sindh, where the concentration of Hindu populations is higher. The victims, upon abduction, are frequently taken to madrassas, where they are held incommunicado and subjected to intense psychological pressure and often physical violence to renounce their faith. The families of these victims are frequently intimidated, preventing them from seeking justice or their daughters' return.

Despite the Constitution of Pakistan ostensibly guaranteeing rights to liberty and religious freedom, the practice of forced conversions blatantly contradicts these constitutional promises. The Pakistan Penal Code and the Sindh Child Marriage Restraint Act provide legal frameworks against abduction, forced marriage, and conversion, yet their enforcement is woefully inadequate. The judicial system and law enforcement agencies are often influenced by religious extremism and local power dynamics, leading to a failure to protect the victims.

The Stitching Global Human Rights Defence highlights these harrowing statistics and realities to urge the United Nations Human Rights Council to:

1. Strongly demand the Government of Pakistan to enforce its national laws against forced conversions and marriages, ensuring that the legal age of marriage and consent is strictly adhered to.
2. Call for establishing independent and secure reporting mechanisms for victims and their families, free from local pressures and threats.
3. Advocate for increased international scrutiny and monitoring of Pakistan's adherence to its human rights obligations, particularly concerning the safety and rights of religious minorities.
4. Support civil society initiatives and NGOs in Sindh working towards the education and empowerment of minority communities, particularly focusing on women and girls who are most vulnerable to forced conversions.
5. Press for systemic reforms within Pakistan's judicial and law enforcement systems to ensure fair, impartial, and effective handling of forced conversion cases.

The Stitching Global Human Rights Defence implores the Council to take immediate and effective action to address this critical human rights issue in Sindh and to stand in solidarity with the victims of these egregious violations.
