



Oral Statement

For the 6th Session of the Forum on Minority Issues

26 – 27 November 2013

Agenda 3: Protection of the existence of and prevention of violence against religious minorities

Speaker: Budi Tjahjono

Thank you Mdm. Chairperson,

Franciscans International (FI) would like to thank the panellist who addressed the issue of human imperative to protect religious minorities. The states indeed have the legal obligation to protect and prevent any form of tensions and acts of aggression and violence against religious minorities.

We would like to draw the attention of the Forum on the situation of the religious minorities in Pakistan. We welcome the acceptance of 13 recommendations of the 2nd UPR of Pakistan in 2012 on the issues related to guaranteeing the human rights of religious minorities, including the commitment of the Government of Pakistan to hold accountable the perpetrators and take punitive measures against instigation of religious hatred.¹ However, we express our concern that the Government of Pakistan only took note, instead of accept, the UPR recommendations asking to repeal and amend the blasphemy law.

The religious minorities are still confronted with challenges to live peacefully in the Pakistani society. This year, there has been several incidents which target the religious minorities. On February 17, 2013, a bomb exploded and killed least 84 people in Quetta, Baluchistan. Some of the victims were members of Shia community. This was claimed by Lashkar-e-Jhangvi, an anti-Shi'a armed group.² The followers of Ahmadi have also been targeted. Mr. Hamid Sami, an Ahmadi follower, was shot dead on 11 June 2013 by unknown in Karachi. On the same day, Mr. Naveed Ahmda, another Ahmadi follower, was shot and seriously wounded by unknown assailants in Jhelum, Punjab.³ It is alleged that they were targeted due to their faith.

Our resources also reported that on 22nd September 2013, two suicide bombers blew themselves in All Saints Church in Peshawar, during a religious service. All Saints Church was built in 1883 and considered as a symbol of religious harmony in the region. The bombs killed at least 78 persons, including 34 women and 7 children, and wounded hundreds. Some of them died later due to the lack of medical treatment. It was one of the deadliest attack against Christian in Pakistan. Following the event, the local Christians reported that they received a threat if they protest against the bombing.

In line with the draft recommendations of this Forum, we urge the Government of Pakistan:

- 1. To take preventive measures against acts of violence directed to religious minorities by repealing or amending the blasphemy law;**
- 2. To investigate thoroughly the attacks against religious minorities and bring the perpetrators to justice immediately;**
- 3. To protect sacred and worship places of religious minorities such as Churches, Hindu and Sikh temples and Mosques and Imam Bargahs of Ahmadi and Shi'a muslims;**
- 4. To invite the UN Independent Expert on Minority Issues and the UN Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion or Belief to make a country visit.**

Thank you.

¹ See recommendation 122.122 and 126 at A/HRC/22/12 that were accepted by the Government of Pakistan.

² See the report of Amnesty International at <http://www.amnesty.org/en/for-media/press-releases/pakistan-authorities-must-do-more-protect-hazara-community-deadly-attacks-2>.

³ See the report of the Asian Human Rights Commission at <http://www.humanrights.asia/news/ahrc-news/AHRC-STM-129-2013>