



MODEL UNITED NATIONS KARACHI II

Pakistan National Assembly

Study Guide

AGENDA

The Dilemma of Faith, Justice and Religious Freedom in Pakistan

Table of Contents

Letter from the Secretary-General	4
Introduction to the National Assembly of Pakistan	5
Mandate of the National Assembly	5
Introduction to the Agenda	7
1. Constitutional Identity & Religious Freedom	9
2. Religious Extremism in Pakistan	9
Understanding the Spectrum of Religious Extremism	9
2.1 Sectarianism: The Internal Religious Conflict	10
2.1 (a) The Hazara Question	10
2.2 Political Mobilization	11
2.3 Blasphemy Allegations & Mob Justice	12
2.4 The Political Economy of Extremism	14
2.5 Education, Radicalization & Religious Narratives	15
3. Forced Conversions and Honour Killings	17
4. The Ahmadiyya Question: Constitutional Identity vs Religious Freedom	18
5. The State's Response to Extremism	20
6. The Role of Tribal Structures & Parallel Justice	22
Relevant Constitutional Articles	23
Relevant PPC Codes	24
PPC Section 295: Injury or Defilement of Places of Worship	24
PPC Section 295-A: Deliberate and Malicious Acts Outraging Religious Feelings	24
PPC Section 295-B: Defiling, Damaging or Desecrating the Holy Qur'an	24
PPC Section 295-C: Derogatory Remarks Concerning the Holy Prophet Muhammad (PBUH)	24
PPC Section 298: Deliberate Intent to Wound Religious Feelings	25

PPC Section 298-A: Derogatory Remarks Concerning Holy Personages	25
PPC Section 298-B: Restrictions on Certain Religious Expressions and Practices of Ahmadis . .	25
PPC Section 298-C: Ahmadiyya Religious Identification and Propagation	26
Brief Party Stances	27

Letter from the Secretary-General

Esteemed Delegates,

On behalf of the entire MUNKR II team, it is my privilege to welcome you to this year's conference. Over the course of the next few days, you will be asked to do far more than defend a position. You will be asked to question assumptions, engage with perspectives different from your own, and work towards solutions to some of the most pressing issues of our time.

MUNKR II has been designed to place you at the centre of meaningful discussion. Across every committee, you will encounter issues that rarely have simple answers. Whether you are addressing questions of international security, economic development, human rights, environmental policy, or domestic governance, the challenge will not simply be to identify what is wrong, but to understand why it persists and determine what can realistically be done about it.

We have not created MUNKR II simply to recreate the debates that take place beyond these walls. We want you to challenge existing approaches, engage with opposing perspectives, and explore the political, economic, social, and legal realities that shape every decision. The strongest solutions will not necessarily be the most ambitious ones, but those that demonstrate a genuine understanding of the circumstances in which they must operate.

Throughout the conference, I encourage you to approach every discussion with curiosity, confidence, and an open mind. Research thoroughly, debate respectfully, and never hesitate to challenge an idea simply because it is conventional. Most importantly, remember that MUN is not only about representing a country or defending a position. It is about learning how to listen, negotiate, collaborate, and lead.

I hope MUNKR II gives you an experience that extends far beyond the committee room. I hope you leave with new perspectives, meaningful friendships, and a greater confidence in your ability to contribute to the world around you.

I look forward to seeing the ideas you challenge, the solutions you develop, and the memories you create throughout the conference.

With warm regards,

Zekiel Gulab

Secretary-General

MUNKR II

Introduction to the National Assembly of Pakistan

The National Assembly of Pakistan (Majlis-e-Shoora) is the directly elected lower house of Pakistan's Parliament and one of the central institutions through which the people of Pakistan exercise political representation at the federal level. Pakistan operates under a federal parliamentary democratic system, in which legislative authority is exercised through Parliament, while the executive government is formed on the basis of the confidence of the National Assembly. Under **Article 50** of the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, Parliament consists of the President and two Houses: the National Assembly and the Senate. The National Assembly therefore occupies a central position within Pakistan's constitutional structure, serving not merely as a forum for political debate but as an institution responsible for legislation, executive oversight, representation and public accountability.



The National Assembly of Pakistan in session.

The composition of the National Assembly is designed to combine geographical representation with representation of historically underrepresented groups. Under Article 51, the Assembly currently comprises 342 seats, including 272 general seats, 60 seats reserved for women, and 10 seats reserved for non-Muslims. General seats are allocated among the provinces and the Federal Capital on the basis of population, while reserved seats for women and non-Muslims are filled through the constitutional electoral mechanism. This composition is particularly significant for a committee discussing religious freedom because the National Assembly is constitutionally structured to bring together representatives of Pakistan's diverse political, geographical and religious communities.

Mandate of the National Assembly

The Assembly's most visible responsibility is **lawmaking**. Members of the National Assembly may introduce, debate and vote upon legislation, while parliamentary committees undertake detailed examination of proposed laws and government policy. Bills concerning matters within the federal legislative domain can proceed through Parliament according to the constitutional legislative procedure. The National Assembly also possesses a particularly important role concerning **financial legislation**: Money Bills, including the Federal Budget, fall within the Assembly's exclusive constitutional domain, giving the lower house considerable influence over taxation, public expenditure and the allocation of federal resources.

However, the National Assembly's role extends considerably beyond passing legislation. It is also an institution of **executive accountability**. Members can question ministers, raise matters of public importance, participate in debates and scrutinize government policy through parliamentary mechanisms such as Question Hour, motions and Standing Committees. The National Assembly itself describes these mechanisms as tools through which Parliament checks the Executive and ensures that the government operates within constitutional limits and respects citizens' fundamental rights. This oversight function becomes particularly important when examining sensitive questions surrounding religious extremism: Parliament is not only capable of creating laws against violence and incitement, but can also question how those laws are implemented by ministries, law-enforcement agencies and other state institutions.

For this committee, however, the most important characteristic of the National Assembly is its role as the **constitutional arena where competing principles of the Pakistani state must be reconciled**. Pakistan's Constitution simultaneously establishes the Islamic character of the Republic, guarantees fundamental rights, protects religious freedom and establishes a democratic parliamentary system. Consequently, questions concerning religion cannot be reduced to a simple conflict between “religion” and “secularism.” A parliamentary discussion on religious extremism requires delegates to examine how **Islamic principles, constitutional rights, criminal law, public order, minority protections, freedom of expression and the responsibilities of the state** interact with one another.

Introduction to the Agenda

“The Dilemma of Faith, Justice and Religious Freedom in Pakistan”

Pakistan's identity as an Islamic Republic creates a complex relationship between religion, the state, individual rights and the rule of law. The Constitution establishes Islam as the state religion while simultaneously guaranteeing fundamental rights, including freedom to profess, practise and propagate religion and protections for religious minorities. This constitutional framework presents a delicate balance: the state is expected to preserve Pakistan's Islamic identity while ensuring that every citizen remains protected by law regardless of religious belief or sect. The challenge becomes particularly significant when religious belief, political expression and questions of public order intersect.



Public demonstrations concerning religious tensions remain a recurring feature of Pakistan's national discourse.

Within this broader framework lies the issue of **religious extremism**, which extends beyond terrorism or organized militant violence. It can manifest through sectarian hostility, religiously motivated violence, hate speech, incitement, mob justice, attacks against places of worship, discrimination, radicalization and the exploitation of religious sentiment for political or social purposes. Pakistan has attempted to address these challenges through measures including the National Action Plan, counter-terrorism institutions, regulation of extremist organizations and counter-extremism initiatives. Yet the effectiveness of these measures remains closely connected to questions of implementation, accountability, education, political will and the capacity of state institutions to prevent violence without compromising fundamental freedoms.

The agenda therefore presents a three-way dilemma between **faith, justice and religious freedom**. The National Assembly must consider how Pakistan can confront religious extremism while protecting legitimate religious expression; how laws intended to preserve public order can be enforced without being misused; and how vulnerable communities can receive meaningful

protection under the law. The discussion consequently extends beyond the question of combating extremism itself and asks what role Parliament, the judiciary, law-enforcement agencies, religious institutions, political actors, educational systems and civil society should play in addressing its underlying causes. Ultimately, the committee must seek a framework in which **religious values, constitutional rights, justice and national security can coexist without one being used to negate the others.**

1. Constitutional Identity & Religious Freedom

Pakistan's constitutional identity is built around the coexistence of Islamic principles, parliamentary democracy, fundamental rights and the protection of minorities. The Constitution declares Islam to be the State religion under Article 2, while the Objectives Resolution, made a substantive part of the Constitution through Article 2A, establishes principles concerning democracy, freedom, equality, tolerance and social justice as well as the exercise of authority within the limits prescribed by Islam. This creates the constitutional foundation for the central dilemma of the agenda: Pakistan is simultaneously an Islamic Republic and a state that constitutionally guarantees rights and freedoms to its citizens.

Religious freedom is primarily protected through Article 20, which provides citizens with the right to profess, practise and propagate their religion, subject to law, public order and morality. Articles 21 and 22 provide additional safeguards concerning religious taxation and religious instruction, while Article 25 establishes equality of citizens before the law and equal protection of the law. The Constitution further directs the state to safeguard the legitimate rights and interests of minorities under Article 36. At the same time, Articles 31 and 227 incorporate Islamic principles into the constitutional framework, requiring the state to encourage an Islamic way of life and providing that existing and future laws should conform to the injunctions of Islam. The resulting framework is therefore not simply a separation between religion and government; rather, it requires the state to reconcile religious principles with constitutional rights.

2. Religious Extremism in Pakistan

Religious extremism in Pakistan extends beyond militant organizations and terrorism, encompassing sectarian violence, hate speech, religious incitement, mob violence, forced conversions, discrimination and the political exploitation of religious identity. Understanding the issue therefore requires distinguishing between religious belief, conservatism, political Islam, sectarianism and violent extremism. Pakistan has witnessed violence against various religious communities, while blasphemy allegations have at times resulted in extrajudicial violence before judicial determination. The challenge is consequently not limited to eliminating extremist organizations. It also requires examining the political, social and institutional environment that allows religious hatred to be legitimized, mobilized and transformed into violence. The role of political actors, religious leadership, state institutions and local power structures is therefore central to understanding and ultimately addressing the problem of religious extremism in Pakistan.

Understanding the Spectrum of Religious Extremism

Before examining individual cases, delegates should distinguish between several concepts that are frequently conflated:

- 1. Religious Conservatism:** A person or political group may advocate strict religious values without supporting violence or coercion. Conservatism itself is not extremism.
- 2. Religious Fundamentalism:** A commitment to interpreting religious texts or traditions in a highly literal or uncompromising manner does not automatically mean an individual supports violence.
- 3. Sectarianism:** Sectarianism occurs when religious differences within a broader faith community become the basis for hostility, discrimination or violence. In Pakistan, this has particularly significant implications for **Sunni-Shia relations**, but also involves divisions among Sunni schools and movements.
- 4. Violent Extremism:** This refers to the use or endorsement of violence to advance an ideological, political or religious objective.
- 5. Religious Terrorism:** The most extreme manifestation is organized violence against civilians or the state undertaken in pursuit of an ideological or religious objective.

2.1 Sectarianism: The Internal Religious Conflict

Sectarianism is arguably one of Pakistan's most persistent manifestations of religious extremism. Unlike attacks directed against non-Muslim minorities, sectarian violence occurs within Pakistan's Muslim population itself, particularly between Sunni and Shia communities and between competing Sunni groups.

The problem became especially severe from the late twentieth century onward, when domestic politics, regional geopolitics, the Afghan conflict, the Iranian Revolution, Saudi-Iranian rivalry and the Islamization policies of General Zia-ul-Haq's era contributed to an increasingly polarized religious environment.

Organizations such as Sipah-e-Sahaba Pakistan/Lashkar-e-Jhangvi, Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan, and later Islamic State-linked actors have been associated with sectarian violence. The result has included targeted killings, suicide bombings, attacks on mosques and imambargahs, and violence against religious scholars.

The scale is significant. CRSS recorded 2,099 deaths from sectarian violence between 2013 and 2018, with Shia and Shia Hazara communities accounting for approximately 54% of the fatalities in that period. In its 2022 security report, CRSS again identified the Shia community as suffering the highest number of sectarian casualties, while Sunnis constituted the second-largest victim group.

2.1 (a) The Hazara Question

The Hazara community of Balochistan, particularly the predominantly Shia Hazara population of Quetta, has faced sustained sectarian violence because of the intersection of their ethnic and religious identity. Human Rights Watch reported that hundreds of Hazaras had been killed in targeted attacks since 2008, including two major 2013 attacks in Quetta: a 10 January 2013 bombing at a snooker club killed 96 people and injured at least 150, while a 17 February 2013 bombing in Hazara Town killed at least 84 Hazaras and injured more than 160; both attacks were attributed to Lashkar-e-Jhangvi (LeJ). The violence has also restricted the community's freedom of movement, employment and education, with HRW reporting that approximately 500,000 Hazaras in Balochistan lived under severe security concerns and that many were forced to consider leaving Pakistan. The problem has continued beyond the major 2013 attacks: in January 2021, Islamic State militants killed 11 Shia Hazara coal miners near Quetta, prompting a six-day protest in which mourners refused to bury the victims until the government addressed their security concerns. The Hazara case therefore demonstrates how sectarian ideology, ethnic identity, militant violence and failures of state protection can reinforce one another, making it a crucial case study for Parliament when debating equal citizenship, counter-terrorism and protection of religious minorities.

2.2 Political Mobilization

One of the most important political dimensions of religious extremism in Pakistan is the relationship between religious organizations and electoral politics. Pakistan's constitutional framework allows religiously oriented political parties to participate in democratic politics, contest elections and represent religious constituencies. Religious political participation is therefore not, in itself, evidence of extremism. The concern arises when religious identity becomes a political instrument for delegitimizing opponents, intimidating political actors or portraying disagreement with a particular religious position as hostility towards Islam.

This becomes particularly problematic when religious mobilization extends beyond electoral politics into street pressure and institutional influence. Religious movements may organize large-scale protests, pressure governments over legislation, challenge judicial decisions, or mobilize supporters around highly sensitive religious issues. In such circumstances, the state faces a difficult balance: suppressing legitimate political expression may threaten freedom of assembly and political participation, while allowing coercive or violent pressure to determine government policy can weaken Parliament, the judiciary and the rule of law.

The experience of Tehreek-e-Labbaik Pakistan (TLP) illustrates this dilemma. TLP has built significant political and street influence around issues concerning the sanctity of the Prophet Muhammad and Pakistan's blasphemy laws, including major protests that have placed considerable pressure on successive governments. For the National Assembly, the central question is therefore not whether religious parties should participate in politics, but where the boundary lies between legitimate religious political expression and coercive religious mobilization. The committee must consider whether negotiation with such movements can preserve short-term stability or whether

repeated concessions risk giving extra-parliamentary actors greater influence over constitutional and legislative decision-making.

On the other hand, Jamaat-e-Islami (JI) is one of the country's oldest Islamist political movements, founded by Abul A'la Maududi in 1941, and has participated in parliamentary politics for decades. Its political history includes supporting Fatima Jinnah against Ayub Khan in the 1965 presidential election, winning seats in the National Assembly in 1970, and later participating in the Muttahida Majlis-e-Amal (MMA), an alliance of religious parties that won 45 National Assembly seats in the 2002 elections. JI has also participated in coalition politics, including an alliance with the PTI government in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa after the 2013 elections. This makes JI an important example of how Islamist ideology can operate through electoral and parliamentary institutions without automatically constituting violent extremism.

2.3 Blasphemy Allegations & Mob Justice

Pakistan's blasphemy framework is primarily contained in Chapter XV of the Pakistan Penal Code (PPC), “Of Offences Relating to Religion.” The principal provisions include Section 295, which criminalizes damaging or defiling a place of worship or sacred object with the requisite intent or knowledge; Section 295-A, which criminalizes deliberate and malicious acts intended to outrage the religious feelings of a class of citizens and carries imprisonment of up to ten years, a fine, or both; Section 295-B, which concerns the wilful defiling, damaging or desecration of a copy of the Holy Quran and carries life imprisonment; and Section 295-C, which concerns derogatory remarks regarding the Holy Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) and provides for the death penalty and fine. Sections 298, 298-A, 298-B and 298-C additionally regulate certain forms of speech and conduct relating to religious figures and religious identity. These provisions are therefore not one single “blasphemy law”; they form a broader statutory framework dealing with offences relating to religion.

The constitutional dilemma begins when these criminal provisions intersect with fundamental rights. Article 20 guarantees every citizen the right to profess, practise and propagate his or her religion, subject to law, public order and morality, while Article 25 guarantees equality before law and equal protection of law. Article 4, which requires individuals to be dealt with in accordance with law, and Article 10A, which guarantees the right to a fair trial and due process, are also highly relevant whenever an individual is accused of a religious offence. Consequently, the mere existence of a criminal allegation cannot legally transform an accused person into a convicted offender. Where accusations result in mob attacks, forced displacement, destruction of property or extrajudicial killing, the issue moves beyond the question of blasphemy and becomes a question of rule of law, due process and the state's constitutional obligation to protect its citizens. HRCP has documented the continued use of blasphemy allegations alongside mob violence, attacks on places of worship and discrimination against religious minorities.

The Jaranwala attacks of August 2023 demonstrate how quickly an allegation can move from a legal complaint to mass violence. Following allegations that Christian residents had committed blasphemy, thousands of people gathered after calls were made through mosque loudspeakers; HRCP reported that at least 24 churches, several dozen smaller chapels and scores of Christian homes were attacked and looted. Its later investigation found that social media played a major role in spreading the allegations and mobilizing crowds, with posts and videos circulating before the violence occurred. The incident illustrates a critical distinction for the National Assembly: the state may investigate an allegation of a criminal offence, but neither a religious leader, political organization nor mob possesses the authority to determine guilt or impose punishment. The Supreme Court has expressly emphasized this principle, stating that it is the court, not individuals or mobs, that must determine whether an offence under Section 295-C has been committed, following a proper trial and credible evidence.

In the Asia Bibi case (2009–2018), Asia Bibi, a Christian farm worker and mother of five, was accused of blasphemy in 2009 following a dispute with Muslim co-workers. She was convicted under **Section 295-C of the PPC** and sentenced to death in 2010; the Lahore High Court upheld the conviction. In **October 2018, the Supreme Court acquitted her**, finding serious weaknesses in the prosecution's case. The case became a defining example of the tension between blasphemy law, due process, minority rights and mob pressure. Following her acquittal, TLP-led protests brought major parts of the country to a standstill and pressured the government over her release.

A useful PML-N example is **Khawaja Asif**, who faced a blasphemy-related complaint after making remarks in the National Assembly emphasizing equality of citizens regardless of religion. In 2020, a PTI-linked local political figure sought registration of a case against Asif under **Sections 295-A and 298-A PPC**, alleging that his remarks about religious equality were offensive. The episode is useful because **no conviction resulted**, but it demonstrates how blasphemy provisions can enter ordinary political discourse and potentially be used against political opponents.

Mob justice represents one of the most dangerous consequences of religious extremism because it replaces due process and judicial authority with collective punishment. In Pakistan, allegations of blasphemy or other religious offences can sometimes trigger crowds to attack accused individuals, their families, homes or places of worship before any court has determined whether an offence actually occurred. The 2021 killing of Sri Lankan factory manager Priyantha Kumara in Sialkot, after he was accused of desecrating a religious poster, and the 2023 Jaranwala attacks, where allegations of Quran desecration were followed by attacks on Christian homes and churches, demonstrate how rapidly religious accusations can escalate into violence. Such incidents raise serious questions under Articles 4, 9, 10A and 25 of the Constitution, concerning the right to be dealt with according to law, security of person, fair trial and equal protection of the law. For the National Assembly, the central issue is therefore not simply how to punish mobs after violence occurs, but how the state can ensure that no religious leader, political actor or crowd is permitted to assume the authority of the courts, while simultaneously protecting freedom of religion and

preventing legitimate religious concerns from being suppressed.

2.4 The Political Economy of Extremism

Religious extremism can also be understood through the political and economic incentives that allow extremist networks, narratives and institutions to survive. Extremism does not necessarily emerge in a vacuum; political marginalization, unemployment, weak governance, local power structures, foreign funding, informal financial networks and competition for social influence can all contribute to an environment in which extremist actors gain influence. NACTA itself identifies poverty, unemployment, political marginalization and religious ideology among factors requiring examination in understanding radicalization, while Pakistan's counter-extremism framework recognizes that combating terrorism requires addressing both financing and the broader conditions that allow extremism to flourish. This creates an important distinction between ideological motivation and material infrastructure: an organization may possess an extremist ideology, but it still requires money, recruitment networks, communication channels, institutions and social legitimacy to operate. This is why Pakistan's National Action Plan specifically called for choking terrorist financing, preventing the re-emergence of proscribed organizations, regulating religious seminaries, countering extremist literature and addressing religious persecution.

The political economy becomes more complicated when religious organizations possess substantial street power, electoral influence or bargaining power with governments. The clearest modern example is Tehreek-e-Labbaik Pakistan (TLP). TLP did not win a National Assembly seat in the 2024 elections, but its vote increased from approximately 2.1 million in 2018 to 2.8 million in 2024, demonstrating considerable popular support despite its limited parliamentary representation. Its influence has instead frequently been exercised through mass mobilization, particularly around blasphemy and the sanctity of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). The party's protests have at various points created major pressure on governments and disrupted national transportation and commerce. Reuters reported in August 2026 that TLP had subsequently been banned and that its leadership and financial assets were targeted in a state crackdown, while also noting longstanding concerns about the historical relationship between the state and hardline Islamist groups.

There have also been media and political allegations connecting mainstream political actors with extremist or militant networks, but these allegations need to be distinguished from established findings. One prominent example involved the PML-N in Punjab: in 2013, the MQM publicly alleged that a "Punjab-based party" had a militant wing containing religious extremist elements and, according to the report, appeared to be referring to PML-N. PML-N rejected the allegation, and the same report noted that the Pakistani Taliban had claimed responsibility for the attack in question. This is therefore best presented in a study guide as a political allegation rather than proof that PML-N funded extremism. Similarly, there have been recurring allegations concerning the broader Pakistani establishment's historical relationships with militant and religious organizations; Reuters has described the state's past support for certain Islamist groups as part of Pakistan's

strategic history, while noting the more recent policy shift against them.

A particularly important distinction for delegates is between funding, political accommodation and ideological sympathy. A government negotiating with a religious movement, permitting it political space, or making concessions during a protest is not automatically the same as financially sponsoring that organization. Conversely, allegations of state patronage can become politically significant even where direct financial transfers are not established. Pakistan's political history contains repeated examples of governments attempting to manage religious movements through negotiation rather than outright confrontation. This creates an environment in which religious organizations can acquire political leverage without necessarily possessing corresponding parliamentary representation. The 2017 Faizabad sit-in involving TLP is an especially important precedent in this regard, because the episode generated major questions about the role of state institutions, political negotiation and the limits of extra-parliamentary pressure.

2.5 Education, Radicalization & Religious Narratives

The relationship between education and religious radicalization became particularly significant during the rule of General Zia-ul-Haq (1977–1988), when Islamization became a central feature of state policy. The National Education Policy of 1979 explicitly called for the revision, modernization and Islamization of curricula in accordance with Islamic ideals. At the same time, the madrassa sector expanded considerably during the 1980s, alongside the Afghan War and the influx of refugees and foreign funding. Research by Brookings notes that the Zia period saw major changes in the madrassa system, with some institutions developing connections to militant networks and becoming involved in sectarian and jihad-oriented mobilization. This does not mean that madrassas as a whole produced extremists; rather, the period created an educational environment in which religious education, state ideology, Afghan jihad and international geopolitics increasingly overlapped.

During the Pervez Musharraf era (1999–2008), particularly after the 9/11 attacks, the state attempted to reverse some of the radicalizing tendencies associated with the previous decades. Musharraf's government introduced madrassa reforms and sought greater regulation of religious seminaries, while curriculum reforms attempted to reduce material considered sectarian or extremist. The government also faced the much larger challenge of confronting militant networks that had developed during the Afghan and Kashmir conflicts. However, reform proved difficult to implement consistently. Contemporary research noted that Pakistan's education system remained deeply divided along public, private and madrassa lines, while attempts during the mid-2000s to remove perceived biases and excessive religious content from curricula faced resistance from conservative textbook writers and education officials. The period therefore represents an important contradiction: the state publicly promoted “enlightened moderation” and counter-extremism while inherited educational and religious structures proved difficult to reform.

Today, the debate has shifted from simply Islamization of education toward questions of curriculum quality, religious tolerance, sectarian narratives, critical thinking and equal citizenship. Following the 2014 Army Public School attack, the National Action Plan called for measures including regulation of seminaries and elimination of extremist literature, while subsequent curriculum initiatives sought greater national cohesion and standards across different education systems. The government's curriculum framework now explicitly emphasizes that textbooks should be free from religious and sectarian bias, respect diversity, and promote critical thinking and problem-solving. Religious Education curricula have also been developed for minority students including Christians, Hindus, Sikhs, Baha'is and Kalash, partly to give them an opportunity to study their own faiths and strengthen their sense of equal citizenship. The contemporary challenge, therefore, is not simply removing religion from education, but developing an education system in which religious knowledge can coexist with pluralism, constitutional rights, critical inquiry and rejection of violence and sectarian hatred.

3. Forced Conversions and Honour Killings

Forced conversion is a major dimension of religious extremism and minority vulnerability in Pakistan, particularly where religion intersects with gender, age, family pressure and unequal social power. The issue most frequently concerns Hindu and Christian girls and women, especially in Sindh and parts of Punjab, who are alleged to have been abducted, married and converted to Islam under circumstances in which genuine consent is disputed. Human-rights organizations have repeatedly documented cases involving minor girls, although precise national statistics are difficult to establish because many cases are never reported and official data collection remains inconsistent. The Sindh Child Marriage Restraint Act 2013, which sets the minimum marriage age at 18 in Sindh, is therefore particularly relevant when allegations involve underage girls. Forced conversion also intersects with Articles 20 and 25 of the Constitution, protecting freedom of religion and equality before the law, while Article 14 protects human dignity and Article 9 protects life and liberty.

The problem is particularly pronounced in Sindh, where Pakistan's Hindu minority is heavily concentrated. Civil-society organizations have repeatedly raised concerns about cases in which Hindu girls are reported missing and subsequently reappear after conversion and marriage, with disputes often centering on whether the conversion was genuinely voluntary. A major legal development came in 2019, when the Sindh High Court dealt with the conversion and marriage of two Hindu sisters, Raveena and Reena, whose case generated national debate over minority rights, age, consent and the role of religious authorities. The controversy demonstrated the difficulty of determining genuine consent where a young woman is economically dependent, separated from her family, or brought before religious authorities only after an alleged abduction. For the National Assembly, the issue therefore extends beyond conversion itself: it involves child protection, forced marriage, abduction, police investigation, evidentiary standards, protection of witnesses and the ability of minority families to seek legal remedies without intimidation.

The issue also has a significant political and institutional dimension. Pakistan's Constitution guarantees the right to profess and practise religion, while Article 36 directs the state to safeguard the legitimate rights and interests of minorities. Yet allegations of forced conversion have repeatedly produced tension between religious institutions, minority-rights organizations, local political actors and law-enforcement agencies. The federal government established a Parliamentary Committee on Forced Conversions to examine the problem, while successive proposals for legislation have faced resistance from religious groups concerned that restrictions could interfere with legitimate conversions to Islam. In 2021, a proposed bill seeking to regulate religious conversion was rejected by Pakistan's Ministry of Religious Affairs' parliamentary committee, which argued that the proposed framework could create difficulties for legitimate conversions. The controversy illustrates the central policy challenge: protecting individuals, particularly children and vulnerable women, from coercion without treating every conversion to Islam as inherently forced or restricting an adult's constitutional freedom to change religion voluntarily.

Alongside this, honour killings in Balochistan and other provinces demonstrate how gender-based violence can intersect with tribal authority, informal justice systems, family control and weak enforcement of formal law. Police data cited by the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan recorded 35 honour-killing cases in Balochistan in 2022, while more recent provincial data recorded 67 cases in 2024, involving 33 female and 42 male victims; rights organizations stress that such figures likely underestimate the real scale because violence in remote areas is frequently unreported. The issue gained national attention in July 2025, when a video emerged showing Bano Bibi and Ehsan Ullah Samalani being taken to a remote location and killed after allegedly eloping; police subsequently arrested 16 people, including a tribal chief and Bano's mother. Reports indicated that the killings were allegedly connected to a jirga, highlighting the continuing influence of informal tribal mechanisms over matters that legally belong to the state and courts. Pakistan has legally criminalized so-called honour killings, including through amendments strengthening the legal framework in 2016, yet the Balochistan cases demonstrate the gap that can exist between legislation and enforcement. The matter is therefore not simply a question of violence against women: it concerns Article 4's requirement that citizens be dealt with according to law, Article 9's protection of life and liberty, Article 25's guarantee of equality, and Article 34's constitutional commitment to women's full participation in national life. For the National Assembly, Balochistan provides a significant case study in the tension between formal constitutional law and informal systems of tribal authority, particularly where jirgas or family elders effectively assume powers to decide marriage, relationships and punishment that belong exclusively to lawful institutions.

4. The Ahmadiyya Question: Constitutional Identity vs Religious Freedom

The Ahmadiyya community is a religious movement founded in 1889 by Mirza Ghulam Ahmad in Qadian, Punjab, then part of British India. Ahmadis identify themselves as Muslims and follow the Quran and Islamic practices, but their interpretation of the status and role of Mirza Ghulam Ahmad as the last Prophet differs from the position held by mainstream Sunni and Shia Muslims. This theological disagreement became particularly significant in Pakistan because the status of the Ahmadi community developed from a religious dispute into a matter of constitutional and criminal law. Following significant political and religious pressure, Pakistan adopted the Second Constitutional Amendment in 1974, which constitutionally classified Ahmadis as non-Muslims. This classification was subsequently reflected in Article 260(3) of the Constitution, which provides the constitutional definitions of “Muslim” and “non-Muslim.” The issue therefore represents a unique situation in which a question of religious identity became formally incorporated into the constitutional structure of the state.

The legal restrictions on Ahmadis expanded further during the rule of General Zia-ul-Haq through Ordinance XX of 1984, which introduced specific restrictions on Ahmadi religious expression. In particular, Sections 298-B and 298-C of the Pakistan Penal Code prohibit certain practices and

terminology associated with identifying as Muslim, including the use of specified Islamic epithets, descriptions or titles and certain forms of propagation of the Ahmadi faith. These provisions create a complex relationship with Article 20, which guarantees citizens the right to profess, practise and propagate their religion, subject to law, public order and morality. The issue also intersects with Articles 4, 9, 14 and 25, concerning lawful treatment, security of person, dignity and equality before law. For the National Assembly, it is therefore important to distinguish between the constitutional and statutory status of Ahmadis and acts of violence against them: regardless of their constitutional classification, killings, mob attacks, destruction of property and unauthorized punishment remain matters for the state's law-enforcement and judicial institutions.

The consequences of this legal and political environment can be seen in continued discrimination and violence against Ahmadis. The Human Rights Commission of Pakistan reported that in 2024 five Ahmadis were killed in faith-based violence, nine people faced blasphemy allegations, 37 were arrested under religious-offence provisions, 252 Ahmadi graves were desecrated and 19 Ahmadi places of worship were vandalized or destroyed. The Supreme Court's 2014 minority-rights judgment is also significant because it emphasized the state's responsibility to protect religious minorities, their places of worship and their fundamental rights. The Ahmadiyya question therefore extends beyond the constitutional definition of religious identity: it encompasses freedom of conscience, minority protection, criminal law, equality, security and the rule of law. For the National Assembly, the central tension lies in reconciling Pakistan's constitutionally defined Islamic identity and the statutory restrictions placed upon Ahmadis with the state's continuing obligation to protect every citizen from violence, discrimination and extrajudicial punishment.

5. The State's Response to Extremism

Pakistan's modern counter-extremism architecture developed in response to the escalation of terrorism, sectarian violence and militant activity, particularly during the 2000s and early 2010s. The National Counter Terrorism Authority (NACTA) was established in 2008 as an administrative unit within the Ministry of Interior and was given administrative and financial autonomy under the NACTA Act, 2013, becoming a statutory body answerable to a Board of Governors. NACTA is not itself a conventional police or military force; its principal function is to coordinate the state's response. Under Section 4 of the NACTA Act, it is responsible for collecting and coordinating intelligence and information, preparing national counter-terrorism and counter-extremism strategies, developing action plans, conducting research, coordinating with domestic and international stakeholders, reviewing relevant legislation and advising the federal government. Its structure includes dedicated functions dealing with counter-terrorism, counter-financing of terrorism, preventing violent extremism, intelligence, research and development, communication and outreach, and monitoring and evaluation. NACTA's counter-terrorism branch also maintains databases concerning proscribed organizations and individuals and develops policies and implementation plans in coordination with other state institutions. Its role is therefore fundamentally one of coordination, policy formation, intelligence integration and monitoring, rather than replacing the police, courts, intelligence agencies or armed forces.

The most important national response was the 20-point National Action Plan (NAP) adopted following the Army Public School attack of 16 December 2014, in which 149 people, including 132 children, were killed. NAP was prepared by NACTA and the Ministry of Interior in consultation with relevant stakeholders and was approved by Parliament on 24 December 2014. It represented a shift toward a coordinated national strategy combining military, legal, financial, educational and ideological measures. Its provisions included action against militant organizations and armed gangs, strengthening NACTA, restrictions on literature promoting hatred, extremism and sectarianism, measures against terrorist financing, preventing the re-emergence of proscribed organizations, regulation and registration of religious seminaries, action against the abuse of the internet for terrorism, restrictions on the glorification of terrorism in media, action against sectarian terrorists, and reforms to the criminal-justice system. Implementation was designed to involve both the federal and provincial governments, with Provincial Apex Committees established under the Chief Ministers to oversee provincial components. NACTA was designated as the monitoring body for NAP, giving it an important role in tracking implementation across government institutions.

The state's response consequently operates through a multi-layered architecture rather than a single institution. The Armed Forces and law-enforcement agencies conduct counter-terrorism operations; provincial Counter Terrorism Departments (CTDs) investigate and pursue terrorism-related cases; the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) and other agencies deal with relevant investigations and financial or cyber dimensions; courts prosecute individuals under laws including the Anti-Terrorism Act 1997; and NACTA coordinates policy and intelligence-related mechanisms.

Pakistan's counter-extremism framework also includes the Anti-Money Laundering Act, Prevention of Electronic Crimes Act, financial regulations and provincial charity laws. NACTA's Counter Financing Terrorism Wing coordinates with provincial CTDs, the Ministry of Interior, the Financial Monitoring Unit, financial regulators and other agencies to address terrorist financing and Pakistan's international obligations. The state's approach has therefore developed beyond purely military operations toward financial disruption, digital monitoring, regulation of extremist organizations, religious-seminary reforms, prosecution and prevention of violent extremism.

A second major component of the state's response has been the attempt to counter the ideological justification for violence, rather than relying solely on arrests and military operations. One important initiative was Paigham-e-Pakistan, a 2018 religious declaration endorsed by more than 1,800 Muslim scholars from different sects. Its central position was that armed rebellion against the Pakistani state cannot be justified through the concept of jihad and that no individual or group has the religious authority to declare war against the state or declare government officials, security personnel or law-enforcement officers non-Muslim and therefore legitimate targets for killing. NACTA incorporates this framework into Pakistan's broader national narrative against terrorism and extremism. This reflects the state's attempt to use religious scholarship itself as part of counter-extremism policy: rather than presenting the struggle exclusively as a military confrontation between the state and militants, it seeks to challenge the religious narratives used to legitimize violence.

Despite the development of this architecture, implementation has remained uneven because counter-extremism requires coordination between institutions with different mandates, provincial governments, law-enforcement agencies, courts, religious institutions and political authorities. NACTA's own framework recognizes that terrorism and extremism cannot be addressed through a single law or a single agency; the response requires kinetic operations, criminal prosecution, counter-financing measures, intelligence coordination and softer interventions aimed at reducing the appeal of extremist ideology. The distinction between counter-terrorism and counter-extremism is therefore particularly important for the National Assembly: counter-terrorism primarily addresses violent organizations and attacks, whereas counter-extremism additionally concerns the narratives, recruitment networks, hate speech, sectarian propaganda, financing structures and social conditions that can facilitate violence. Pakistan's institutional response has consequently evolved from an emphasis on security operations toward a broader model involving law, intelligence, finance, education, religious scholarship, digital regulation and prevention. NACTA's current policy framework includes the National PVE Policy 2024, demonstrating that preventing violent extremism remains part of the state's continuing counter-extremism agenda.

6. The Role of Tribal Structures & Parallel Justice

Tribal structures and jirgas have historically played an important role in dispute resolution across parts of Balochistan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, rural Sindh and Punjab, particularly in areas where access to formal courts and law-enforcement institutions is limited. A jirga traditionally consists of tribal elders or community figures who mediate disputes and seek reconciliation. However, the constitutional problem arises when these informal bodies move beyond mediation and begin functioning as parallel courts, determining guilt, ordering punishments or deciding matters involving marriage, family disputes, property or criminal offences. In *National Commission on the Status of Women v. Government of Pakistan* (PLD 2019 SC 218), the Supreme Court examined the operation of jirgas and panchayats acting as adjudicating bodies and held that judicial authority belongs to courts established under the Constitution or law. The Court specifically identified violations involving Articles 4, 8, 9, 10-A, 14, 25, 34 and 37, particularly where informal decisions undermine due process, equality, dignity and access to justice.

The consequences become particularly severe when tribal authority is used to enforce honour codes, punish alleged relationships or control women's choices. The Supreme Court's 2019 judgment highlighted concerns that women and socially weaker members can be disproportionately disadvantaged by jirgas, including through decisions involving coercion, humiliation or violence. Balochistan provides a particularly important contemporary example: in 2025, the killing of Bano Bibi and Ehsan Ullah Samalani after they allegedly married without family approval was reported as having been ordered through a tribal jirga, with multiple suspects subsequently arrested. The case generated national debate over the continuing influence of tribal authority and the state's ability to enforce formal law in areas where informal power structures remain strong. The constitutional position is therefore clear: jirgas may have a role in voluntary mediation or reconciliation, but they cannot become substitutes for courts or impose criminal punishments. The issue ultimately concerns the supremacy of the Constitution, equal access to justice, women's rights and the state's responsibility to ensure that no tribal, religious or community authority exercises judicial power outside the legal system.

Relevant Constitutional Articles

Article	Subject	Why it Matters
Article 2	Islam as State religion	Establishes Pakistan's constitutional Islamic identity
Article 2A	Objectives Resolution	Connects sovereignty, democracy, freedom, equality and Islamic principles
Article 4	Right of individuals to be dealt with according to law	Extremely important against mob justice and parallel justice
Article 8	Laws inconsistent with Fundamental Rights	Important when examining restrictive legislation
Article 9	Security of person	Relevant to killings, mob violence and terrorism
Article 10A	Fair trial & due process	Essential for blasphemy accusations and criminal proceedings
Article 14	Dignity of man	Relevant to torture, humiliation and mob punishment
Article 17	Freedom of association	Relevant to religious/political organizations
Article 19	Freedom of speech	Directly relevant to religious speech, hate speech and blasphemy
Article 20	Freedom of religion	Core article of the entire agenda
Article 22	Religious instruction	Important for education and minority students
Article 25	Equality before law	Central to minority protection
Article 26–27	Non-discrimination	Relevant to religious discrimination
Article 31	Islamic way of life	Connects state policy and religious identity
Article 33	Discouraging prejudices	Relevant to sectarianism and social divisions
Article 34	Women's participation	Relevant to honour killings and forced conversions
Article 36	Protection of minorities	Extremely important for your agenda
Article 227	Quran & Sunnah / laws	Major constitutional provision for the faith–law relationship
Article 228–230	Council of Islamic Ideology	Important institutional mechanism
Article 260(3)	Muslim/non-Muslim definitions	Essential for the Ahmadiyya chapter

Relevant PPC Codes

PPC Section 295: Injury or Defilement of Places of Worship

Section 295 criminalizes the destruction, damage or defilement of a place of worship or an object regarded as sacred by a religious class when the act is committed with the intention of insulting that religion, or with knowledge that the act is likely to be regarded as an insult. The provision therefore protects religious sites and sacred objects belonging to any religious class, rather than being limited to one particular faith. The punishment may extend to two years' imprisonment, a fine, or both. For this agenda, Section 295 is particularly relevant to attacks on mosques, churches, temples, Ahmadi places of worship and other religious sites, as well as the state's obligation to prevent religious violence and protect places of worship.

PPC Section 295-A: Deliberate and Malicious Acts Outraging Religious Feelings

Section 295-A deals with acts committed with a deliberate and malicious intention to outrage the religious feelings of a class of Pakistani citizens by insulting or attempting to insult their religion or religious beliefs through spoken or written words or visible representations. The requirement of deliberate and malicious intention is significant because the provision is not simply framed around the fact that someone found an expression offensive; the prosecution must establish the legally relevant intention specified by the section. The offence carries imprisonment of up to ten years, a fine, or both. It is particularly relevant to debates surrounding hate speech, religious incitement, provocative publications and the boundary between freedom of expression under Article 19 and protection of religious communities from deliberate incitement or insult.

PPC Section 295-B: Defiling, Damaging or Desecrating the Holy Qur'an

Section 295-B specifically concerns the Holy Qur'an and criminalizes wilfully defiling, damaging or desecrating a copy of the Qur'an or an extract from it, as well as using it in a derogatory manner or for an unlawful purpose. Unlike Section 295-A, which concerns the religious feelings of a class generally, Section 295-B is specifically directed toward the protection of the Qur'an. The punishment prescribed is imprisonment for life. In practical terms, allegations under this provision can have consequences far beyond the courtroom because accusations of Qur'an desecration have historically triggered public anger, mob mobilization and attacks on accused persons or communities, making due process and protection of the accused especially important.

PPC Section 295-C: Derogatory Remarks Concerning the Holy Prophet Muhammad (PBUH)

Section 295-C criminalizes the use of spoken or written words, visible representations, or an imputation, innuendo or insinuation, whether directly or indirectly, that defiles the sacred name of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). The provision is therefore broader in its wording than a prohibition limited only to explicit spoken statements, and it has become one of Pakistan's most politically and socially sensitive criminal provisions. The statutory text provides for death or imprisonment for life, together with a fine; however, the Federal Shariat Court's 1991 judgment in *Muhammad Ismail Qureshi v. Pakistan* held that the punishment of death is the prescribed punishment under the Islamic injunctions applicable to Section 295-C. For your MUN, this provision is central to discussions of blasphemy accusations, false allegations, evidentiary safeguards, judicial independence, mob justice and the protection of accused persons before conviction.

PPC Section 298: Deliberate Intent to Wound Religious Feelings

Section 298 concerns the deliberate use of words, sounds, gestures or objects with the intention of wounding the religious feelings of another person. It is therefore concerned with conduct directed toward another person's religious sensitivities and differs from Sections 295-A and 295-C, which address particular categories of religious insult. The provision can cover conduct expressed verbally, through sounds or gestures, or through the display or use of objects, where the required deliberate intention is established. Its significance for the committee lies in the broader question of religious harmony and the limits placed upon conduct that intentionally provokes or wounds religious sentiment, particularly in situations where individual expression can contribute to communal tension.

PPC Section 298-A: Derogatory Remarks Concerning Holy Personages

Section 298-A addresses the use of derogatory remarks concerning specified holy personages, including members of the Prophet's family, the Khulafa-e-Rashideen and other designated religious figures identified by the law. It covers spoken or written words and visible representations, as well as conduct falling within the provision's specified forms of expression. The section is important because it extends Pakistan's religious-offensive framework beyond the Holy Prophet (PBUH) and the Qur'an to other specifically protected religious personalities. For the purposes of your committee, it is relevant to the broader legal regulation of religious expression and to the distinction between legitimate disagreement or discussion and conduct criminalized because it crosses the statutory threshold established by Parliament.

PPC Section 298-B: Restrictions on Certain Religious Expressions and Practices of Ahmadis

Section 298-B forms part of the special criminal-law provisions applicable to persons of the Ahmadiyya community. It restricts the use of certain Islamic titles, descriptions and terminology

and regulates specified practices relating to places of worship and religious figures, including the use of terminology reserved by law for certain Islamic institutions or personalities. The provision was introduced through Ordinance XX of 1984 and therefore represents a significant shift from general religious-offence provisions toward legislation specifically regulating the religious expression of one constitutionally recognized minority community. It is particularly important for your agenda because it raises the constitutional tension between Article 20's protection of religious practice and statutory restrictions imposed upon Ahmadi religious expression.

PPC Section 298-C: Ahmadiyya Religious Identification and Propagation

Section 298-C further regulates the religious expression of persons belonging to the Ahmadiyya community. It criminalizes a person of the Qadiani or Lahori group who calls or represents himself as a Muslim, describes or presents his faith as Islam, or propagates or invites others to accept his faith in the manner prohibited by the provision. The section also restricts the use of certain Islamic terminology and practices specified by law, and carries imprisonment and/or a fine as provided in the statute. This provision is particularly significant for the National Assembly because it directly connects constitutional religious classification under Article 260(3), criminal law and freedom of religion under Article 20, making it one of the clearest examples of the central dilemma of your agenda: the relationship between Pakistan's constitutional Islamic identity and the religious freedoms of a constitutionally recognized minority.

Brief Party Stances

PML-N (Governing Party): Constitutional Islamic identity + strong state enforcement. PML-N's stated principles support Pakistan's Islamic constitutional framework while explicitly recognizing minorities' freedom to profess and practise their religion. Its 2024 manifesto calls for legislation against incitement of violence against minorities, protection of minority places of worship, action against hate speech and stronger penalties for incitement.

PPPP (Coalition Government): Pluralist and minority-rights focused. PPPP's 2024 manifesto explicitly invokes Articles 20, 22, 25 and 36, calls for implementation of the Supreme Court's 2014 minority-rights judgment and proposes a statutory National Minorities Commission. It also argues that discrimination against non-Muslims in certain constitutional offices should be reconsidered.

MQM-P (Coalition Government): Strongest emphasis on religious harmony and equal citizenship. MQM's 2024 manifesto calls for protection of minorities based on Jinnah's 11 August vision, opposes religious discrimination and exploitation, and proposes an empowered National Minority Commission. It also calls for repeal of discriminatory provisions against minorities.

SIC (Opposition): Islamic constitutional framework + inter-sectarian harmony. SIC presents itself as a party rooted in Islamic teachings while emphasizing justice, equality, peace and social harmony regardless of religion or background. In Parliament it is closely associated with the PTI-backed opposition bloc, so its stance can emphasize religious identity while opposing violence and sectarian hatred.

JUI-F (Opposition): Religiously conservative parliamentary politics. JUI should defend Pakistan's Islamic constitutional character and the role of Islamic scholarship in legislation, while maintaining that political/religious advocacy should operate through constitutional and parliamentary channels rather than unauthorized violence. On the Ahmadi question, JUI-F has historically taken a particularly strong position supporting the 1974 constitutional settlement; Fazlur Rehman publicly commemorated its 50th anniversary in 2024.