



Press Conference



Rev. Humphrey Peters addressing the Press Conference

The Possibility of Foreign hand in Gojra's Incident (Faith Friends)

We can't even think of desecrating the Holy Quran. The government should compensate the loss (Rev. Humphrey Peters)

None of the religion teaches to take the life of innocent people (Allama Fakhar ul Hassan Kararvi)

Faith Friends of Pakistan have strongly condemned the Gojra's incident which took six precious lives. They said the possibility of foreign hand cannot be ignored, as they want Muslim and Christians to fight against each other. They further said that Christians can't even think of dishonouring the Holy Quran.

The government should punish those involved in this incident. The government should also compensate the loss. These views were expressed in Peshawar Press Club during Press Conference by Rev. Humphrey Peters, who is also the General Secretary, Church of Pakistan.

Other members who were present in this press conference were: Charan Jeet Singh (Sikh community), Rev. Joseph John, Allama Fakhar ul Hassan Kararvi (Shia Muslim), Haroon Sarab Diyal (Hindu community), Rev. S.P. Asghar, Mukhar Bacha (Sunni Muslim).



Allama Kararvi addressing the Press Conference

In this press conference some of the political, social community leaders were also

present Rev. Humphrey Peter's further said that the allegations of desecration of Quran in Gojra, is not true. It is always the minorities, who are targeted by the blasphemy law. Instead of arresting hundreds of innocent people the government, should arrest the main culprits, and punish them. Allama Kararvi said that none of the religions permit to take the lives of innocent people.

These incidents which are frequently happening is the proof that government has failed to resolve these issues. Others were also of the view that all the communities living in Pakistan should sit together and solve these problems. Government of Pakistan should give the rights to the minorities.

All the speakers were of the same view that the government should probe into matter, and they should compensate the loss of life and property in Gojra.

Report By, Muzzam, Admin., Faith Friends

7 Christians Killed in Pakistan Violence (By VOA News 01 August 2009)



Coffins of the dead, and the Christians protest

Authorities say seven Christians, including four women and a child, have been killed in clashes with Muslims in Pakistan's eastern province of Punjab. The provincial minister for minorities, Shahbaz Bhatti, said a group of radical Muslims burned the homes of Christians in the city of Gojra Saturday, after accusing them of desecrating Islam's holy book, the Koran.

Bhatti said there was no truth to the allegations. Television footage from the scene showed houses burning and streets strewn with blackened debris. There were also reports of gunfights. Provincial officials urged both the Muslim and Christian communities to show restraint. Elsewhere, police said Saturday they had arrested a member of an al-Qaida linked group, suspected of involvement in several attacks including last year's suicide bombing of Islamabad's Marriott Hotel. Authorities detained Rao Shakir, a suspected member of Lashkar-e-Jhangvi, on the outskirts of Islamabad this week.



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Thanksgiving & Prayer Requests



Diocese of Peshawar is grateful to God for His blessings and Mercies and also to the Partners for their financial and prayer support.

Please Pray for;

1. The 'Internally Displaced' Christians of Swat and Malakand Division have now returned to their native towns, after spending 3 months at the Christian Vocational Training Centre (CVTC), Mardan, Camp for the Christian IDPs. May God help them to re-build their homes and lives.
2. Please remember the Christian community of Gojra and Korian in your prayers, they have recently been victimized by the Islamic Religious Extremists. They too need to recover, and to re-build their homes and lives. They are still struggling for equal rights and justice.
3. The War on Terror is still going on, kindly pray for those who are determined to eradicate this menace for good.
4. We need your prayer support for those who are living in hostile areas of NWFP, especially the Pakistani Christians and their institutions.
5. The Diocesan Relief Work in Pateka, Balakot. May God help the Diocese to work more effectively for the development of the Earthquake victims.

Special Prayer requests;

1. Please remember Pakistan, and especially N.W.F.P, that peace and stability may prevail in our region. The country is passing through a very difficult period, because of Suicide Bombings and Terrorist Attacks.
2. Please remember Pakistan and especially the minorities as they are facing the daily scarcity of flour and other food commodities; the prices have gone extremely high.

The Gojra Incident

A summary of events as shared by Dr. Arif Alvi [Sec General of PTI] as he narrated his conversation with one of his party members who was in Gojra to investigate [the horrific incident which involved the killing of seven Christians](#)

A lot of detail has been published in the newspapers today. Brig. (R) Samson Sharaf of PTI visited Gojra yesterday and has met and interviewed a lot of people. He informs us that the incident started at a wedding reception where there was some misbehaviour by a drunk person. On my query he said it was a Pakistani but on my insistence he just said that the person did not belong to the Christian community but of the majority religion in Pakistan. This person was, as courteously as possible in such a situation, escorted out.

But he and his friends reacted and created a scene and started making allegations. The easiest way to put non-Muslims on the defensive in Pakistan is an accusation of blasphemy. It is like Karo Kari where an allegation is enough for criminals to unleash their venom. Some of the local maulvis were informed and they started inciting the Muslims in the area. The reaction was further inflamed by a person Qadeer Awan (who is an official of PML-N) who sent people to Jhang to import activists, some of whom came masked and surrounded the Christian village. There was firing into the village and some Christians defending the village by firing in the air to scare away the people. Police was present but took only evasive action and used tear-gassing. This continued for 5 hours and then buses loaded of people joined the mob, with the police backing away, ransacked the entire village and burnt six Christians alive and shot dead one.

For more than a day the government did not register an FIR and it scared the Christian community as they felt that this was being done to allow FIR's to be registered on a blasphemy case despite the fact that the Prime Minister was on record that no such thing had actually happened. Another suspected reason for not having registered an immediate FIR was also the intense involvement of some PML-N people. The community along with the dead bodies protested and blocked

the highway. The FIR was finally registered and the demand of the community was agreed to in naming government officials responsible for their inaction in registering the FIR. I have been told through confirmed sources that the Chief of Army Staff had to use his offices to have this done. Those responsible should be brought to justice quickly under the anti-terrorism act and given severe exemplary punishments to end this game of false accusations and murder.

Minorities suffer all manner of humiliation through false accusations made under these laws. In the present state, intolerance and violence in Pakistan, the Blasphemy Law is a tool in the hands of extremist elements to settle personal scores against members of religious minorities. The Laws themselves provide non-specific and vague definition of blasphemy, yet blasphemy carries a mandatory death sentence in some cases. There are also serious problems with the mechanisms to implement the Laws. Since the mandatory death sentence was introduced as a result of Amendment Act No. III (1986) to Section 295-C, many innocent people have lost their lives, including some accused persons who had not been brought to trial. For example, Niamat Ahmer, Tahir Iqbal and Manzoor Masih were killed even before the courts could hear the cases registered against them. Some of you would also remember the killing of Jagdish Kumar in Karachi by a violent mob of co-workers in April 2008, dozens took part and hundreds watched. No action has yet been taken or has made news. According to human rights reports there was no blasphemy involved but a personal incident and enmity, which is usual in all such cases. Urgent action is needed to punish the culprits, including negligent officials to assuage the feelings of our Christian brothers and sisters, and to ensure future quick action if there is any danger of such violence.

Seven Christians Kidnapped

Last week, seven Christians along with a Muslim fellow were kidnapped by some unknown miscreants. It is believed that they were traveling back to Bannu from North Waziristan. So far no group has claimed for this crime, and their where about is still not known. The local police is still searching for the missing people.

In God's name

Oliver Caleb

The Gojra incident is a national disgrace. Those who have conscious are nodding their heads with shame. Meanwhile the government this time has immediately started the rehabilitation process, and rebuilding of the houses of the victims of this heinous crime is under progress. A token sum of money has also been given to the affected families. But all these measures can not compensate or heal their wounds until and unless the real culprits, planners and executors of this crime are brought to the justice. And the state needs to reassure the minorities that such incidents will never occur again.

Now, it is evident that the so called 'blasphemy law' is the root cause of all the evils practiced against the defenseless poor minorities, especially the Christians.

Although, this blasphemy law did exist in the constitution long before Pakistan came into existence, ever since the British rule. But the British had carefully crafted, rather drafted the law, and it states that an open blasphemy against any religion is a crime in the eyes of the law, but the Section 295-C amendment by the military dictator of the 70's and 80's i.e. General Zia Ul-Haq specifically drafted the law to target the minorities, which can be activated by the majority with a click of a rumour, to settle personal, social, economical and religious disputes.

The ignorant masses are guided, rather misguided by the religious extremist leaders and politicians to kill, burn, torture and persecute their fellow citizens in the name of God. Thus, this law has become a black law/ a bad law, which is constantly misused as a weapon by the Jihadi mentality and their outfits in Pakistan.

Under the British law only six cases were recorded, but after the amendment of section 295-C, a flood-gate has been opened for the religious extremism, almost 641 cases has so far been registered, or more than six hundred people / groups fell victims to this black law, which only supports the majority. The frequent attacks on minorities, and their worship places and institutions have seriously hurt the image of the state and have left a permanent scar on its memory.

The day, this shameful incident happened there was a tiny little news in the electronic media, and the next day it was a routine news in the Print Media, mentioning that a few Christians desecrated the Holy Qurran and the Muslim majority reacted against it, thus keeping it low profile.

But on the protest of Christian community, the media of Pakistan did realize that it was more than just blasphemy news, as the fighting between the two groups intensified and the main road was blocked.

Meanwhile the banned Jihadi groups kept violating the law and the human rights by burning over 100 houses of Christians and killing seven people including two minors. They also badly damaged the two churches of the local Christian inhabitants, and also desecrated the Holy Books including the Holy Bibles in the Church.



Image of the burnt Religious books and material

The police did not intervene and the local administration took no notice of the intimidating speeches and announcements against Christians on the loud speakers of the local mosques. They even delayed and rather refused to register an FIR (First Information Report) against the culprits as they themselves were directly or indirectly part and parcel of the conspiracy against Christians.

Eventually a case against the miscreants was registered after delaying it for more than 24 hours. Anyhow, an enquiry is in process, but God knows when it will be completed, and if completed, any action will be taken or not, is the question.

Now-a-days, it has become a fashion and business of the television channels to host the 'Talk Shows'. It's really amazing that still some 'honourable guests' shamelessly keep defending the 'blasphemy law' by beating around the bush. Despite the fact that most of the hosts of the Talk shows keep criticizing and blaming them for their discriminatory attitudes. Many have made a habit of comparing such incidents with similar kind of happenings in India, and they keep flinging the figures in the face of the nation. Thus, they totally forget that where ever religious extremism happens should be condemned and inhumane treatment by the majority should be discouraged and stopped in their own vicinity.

Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) never encouraged maltreatment towards minorities. He himself was cursed by the non-Muslims of his era on a number of occasions, but his (PBUH) attitude was of forgiveness and tolerance. But some of the 'so called Ulemas' do not follow their own Prophet's (PBUH) footsteps.

Once again, there is need to promote religious harmony through Inter-Faith and to educate the masses about human-rights to promote peace, love and a culture of tolerance.

The 'Blasphemy Law' needs to be repealed by the Parliament of the democratic government of Pakistan. Today, the intellectual elite, clean hearted people and the media is crying against this bad law, but things like that are not easy to undo --- as some religious political parties will take political advantage by this noble act of scraping the Section 295-C from the constitution of Pakistan.

Quid-e-Azam, Mr. M.A. Jinnah in one of his speeches announced that the state of Pakistan will not interfere or intervene in its citizen's private beliefs and/or religions. He had a dream of a prosperous Pakistan, where there will be Peace, Tolerance and religious harmony, but his dream never materialized. And there are no signs yet that his dream will become a reality in the near future. There is chaos in the country, terrorism, religious extremism, and sectarian violence is on the rise. And people are still fighting over the regional images of God, and killing continuous in the name of God by Jihadi outfits in Jinnah's Pakistan.

Nevertheless, this kind of circumstances and incidents can not shake the foundations of Christian belief, it rather strengthens the Faith, as Jesus **predicted**, **"Then you will be handed over to be persecuted and put to death and you will be hated by all nations because of me"** (Matt. 24:9).

Similarly, in Matthew 10:28, Jesus **warned**, **"Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but can not kill the soul. Rather, be afraid of the One who can destroy both soul and body in hell"**.

The good news and reinforcement for our faith also comes from the Lord's **promise**, as He said, **"All men will hate you because of me, but he who stands firm to the end will be saved"**. (Matt. 10:22)



A Protest by the Christian community of Gojra

Youth Summer Camp 2009



Group Photo, Youth Summer Camp, 2009

The Diocese of Peshawar organizes a Youth Summer Camp every year, since 1995. This year the youth summer camp was held at Murree Hills from 4 to 8 August 2009. Keeping in view the present situation of our region, the Camp theme was set as, "Redeeming the time, because the days are evil." (Ephesians 5:16).



Rev. Humphrey Peters during a teaching session

The youth delegates from our various parishes participated in the Camp and learned from the 'Bible Study' and other sessions during the camp, in a spiritual atmosphere.

The Diocesan Secretary, Rev. Humphrey Peters, in his session talked about the Present situation and challenges for Youth and how can we prepare ourselves to face these challenges to survive.

Rev. Irfan Jamil, from St. Thomas' Church Islamabad was the keynote speaker. He led two sessions, first about "Terrorism & Violence", and the second session was about "Growing Sinful Nature among the Young Generation".

Mr. Naeem Nazir, the OTS Teacher from Peshawar also led two sessions; 1) "Ways of Evangelism in Present Situation", 2) "Our Response, to the Invitation of other religions for conversion".

Mr. Shahzad Bashir, from Diocese of Peshawar facilitated in two sessions; 1) "Signs of the Second Coming of Jesus" and 2) "Project Planning: Preparing Problem Tree".

Mr. Insar Gohar led Bible Studies from the Book of "Daniel".

Recreational activities like Quiz, Song and Speech competitions were also organized, which were enjoyed by all. The winners received Trophies and other prizes.

A special Prayer Meeting was held to offer special prayers for the 'Gojra' incident. The Youth knelt before God and felt blessed by the touch of the Holy Spirit.



The Campers in a Prayer Meeting

In the last session, the campers shared their testimonies and their life-changing experiences. The Youth was also motivated to start 'Small Projects' in their respective parishes for Youth and for the community development.

The Youth Summer Camp always refreshes and renews the zeal of our youth. It always brings some life-changing experiences among the youth. It is also a source of encouragement for the youth, which promotes their personality traits, such as 'leadership qualities', etc.

Women Camp 2009

The Diocesan Women Desk of the Peshawar Diocese organized a 'Women Leadership Training Camp' at the Retreat & Renewal Centre, Murree, from 31 July to 3 August 2009. About 40 women from various parishes of the diocese participated in this camp.

The theme of the camp was, "Women Empowerment". This theme was picked keeping in view the current situation of our Province. The character of Ruth, from the 'Old Testament' was set as a role model, whose husband died and instead of losing her heart, she accepted the people of her husband's belief and his God. The women of today can also empower themselves in the society,

by utilizing their skills and talent given by God.

Spiritual Aspect:

Mrs. S.P. Asghar, the president Women Council, raised spiritual awareness among to women and talked about their responsibilities as a woman in their family and society. She also stressed on giving Tithes and thanks-giving, and said, 'Giving is better than taking'.

Bible Study:

Mrs. Reena Patrick led the Bible study sessions, in which she taught the Golden Principles of Life. The passage was (1-Thessolians 4:9-12).

She described the Golden Principles; 1) Brotherly Love, 2) Courage for Hardwork, 3) Polite Attitude, 4) Self Sufficiency.

She emphasized that women should bring a change in their behaviour, so that the Terrorism, Violence and Social ills could be eradicated from the Society. And said, "we should develop ourselves in Christ and bring others into it".

The mornings started with 'Quite Time' for personal prayers and later followed by a Devotion, Worship and other sessions.

Social Issues:

Mrs. Catherine Alexander from Lahore took teaching sessions on the social issues, i.e. Gender, Reproductive Health, HIV/AIDS, and Child Abuse. She used audio/visual aids and also led group discussions. The participants liked and appreciated the teachings. They emphasized to arrange the follow-up sessions of this kind of teaching courses in all the parishes of the Diocese. So, it was decided to organize a follow-up programme in the next quarter of this year.

Entertainment Activities:

Mrs. Alishibha Ghouri organized some leisure activities, including art-work for women, which was enjoyed by all.

At the end of the Camp, participants committed themselves before God that whatever they learnt at the Camp, will teach other women in their respective parishes, on return.

Provincial Conference on Inter-Religious Peace and Harmony



Speakers of the Inter-Religious Conference

July, 28 - 31, 2009, an Inter-Religious Peace and Harmony, Provincial Conference was held at the Peshawar University, Bara Gali Campus, NWFP. This conference was organized by the Pakistan Council of World Religions (Faith Friends).

The conference had four sessions, each with a different theme. The first session was about 'Basic Religious Beliefs', in which Roshan Singh of the Sikh Community, Rev. Riaz Mubarak from Christian Community, Mr. Pretam Dass represented the Hindu Community, whereas Prof. Dr. H..A. Ghafoor was the key note speaker from the Muslim majority. All the speakers gave a briefing about their religious belief and their contribution towards Inter-Faith promotion in Pakistan.



Rev. Joseph John addressing the Conference

The second session was about the Holy Personalities of various Religions. The speakers were Dr. Rashid Ahmad (Muslim Community), Rev. Joseph John (Christian Community), Charan Jeet Singh (Sikh Community) and Darpan Lal (Hindu Community).

All the speakers highlighted the Holy Religious Personalities of their religions and their message for the Humanity.

The third session was about the concept of Peace, Harmony and Welfare in different religions in which Qari Rooh ullah, Madui/Dr. Kararvi, Rev. Joseph John, Charan Jeet Singh and Darpan expressed their point of views in the light of their own religions.

The fourth and final session was about the Principles of Inter-faith Dialogue in different Religions. Key note speakers of this session were, Dr. Qibla Ayaz, Rev. Shahzad Mrad, Charan Jeet / Satwant and Miss Sharda Kumari / Haroon.



Rev. Shahzad Murad addressing the Conference

There were about 100 participants in this conference who gained good understanding about different religions and their struggle to promote Inter-Faith. Once again the Diocesan established organization 'The Faith Friends' has played an active role to promote Peace and Religious Harmony among different religions to establish a model society for durable peace and to promote a culture of tolerance.



Diocesan Representatives for the Conference

The delegation of the Peshawar Diocese very nicely represented the Diocesan role in promotion of Inter-Faith harmony through 'Faith Friends'. The participants of this delegation were Rev. Joseph John, Rev. Shahzad Murad, Rev. Riaz Mubarik, Rev. Naeem Patrick, Mrs. Reena Patrick (women representative), Mr. Naeem Nazir, Mr. Nawaz Nathaniel, Mr. Shahid Younas and Mr. Vicky Pervaiz (youth representative).

Attention

Petition asking to repeal Blasphemy Law

Dear colleagues,
I would like to draw your attention to the report about a petition asking for the repeal of the blasphemy law in Pakistan which is published on ACNS at <http://www.anglicancommunion.org/acns/news.cfm/2009/8/20/ACNS4647>

If you felt able to give the petition further publicity via your own media outlets that would be very helpful.

Please note that an important feature of the petition is that it is co-signed by both a Christian bishop and a leading Muslim scholar.

NIFCON's involvement in the petition came about in response to the signals we were sent by contacts in /from Pakistan that the Gojra incident was the symptom of a perennial problem that needed to be addressed.

Yours with best wishes

Clare Amos

Director of Theological Studies
(with particular responsibility for theological education and inter faith concerns)

Anglican Communion Office

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FIR registered, and Arrest Warrants issued for Bishop of Faisalabad

This is to share that the Police of Gojra has registered an FIR (First Investigation Report) against innocent Bishop of Faisalabad, the Rt. Rev. John Samuel, Diocese of Faisalabad, Church of Pakistan and his two sons, along with 100 unnamed Christians for conspiring the Gojra incident, whereas the real culprits are still roaming around unleashed.

Please visit the following links for full story:

<http://www.religiousintelligence.co.uk/news/?NewsID=4939>

<http://geoconger.wordpress.com/category/anglican-church-news/church-of-pakistan>

Memorial Service of Dr. Ulla Schmitz

The Memorial Service of the Dr. Ulla Schmitz was held on Friday, August 21, 2009. Dr. Ulla's brother came from Germany to attend the service held on Friday at 12 o'clock noon at the Christian Hospital Tank. People from various parts of the province attended the Memorial Service. The priests of Peshawar Diocese, Rev. Ijaz Gill (Dean, Southern Deanery), Rev. Altaf Gohar and Rev. Razak Barkat led the Service.

Dr. Ulla is buried inside the compound of the Christian Hospital Tank, according to her wish/will.

Dr. Ulla Schmitz was the Project Director of the Christian Hospital Tank and her 23 years of service for the Tank Community and its surroundings is highly appreciated and acknowledged by both Muslims and Christians, alike.

Government Announces the return of IDPs

The Government of Pakistan has announced the return of the IDPs back to their homes in Swat and Malakand areas. The Return of IDPs is scheduled from July 13, 2009, under the security umbrella of the Pakistan Armed Forces. However, despite reassurances from the Government, majority of the IDPs are reluctant to leave as they are assessing the ground realities of the war torn area before returning to their homes.

News regarding Diocesan IDP's Relief Camp, published in the daily 'Muslim'



Independence Day Celebrations



Flag of Pakistan

Special 'Thanks-giving Services' were held at various parishes of the Peshawar Diocese, on the Independence Day of Pakistan. The St. John's Cathedral Parish celebrated the Independence day (14th August) of Pakistan, with respect and national zeal. A special service was conducted in the Cathedral. In the morning, Rev. Joseph John, Rev. Naeem Partick and Rev. Sharzeel Khan led the Flag-raising ceremony and the congregation sung the National Anthem. The priests led the 'Thanks-giving Service' after the Ceremony, and special prayers were offered for the 'Peace and Solidarity' in the Country, and for the suffering Christians of the Gojra Incident, led by Mr. Naseem Ghouri, the Parish Secretary. The Sunday school's children and the Church Choir also presented the National Songs. Dr. Yousaf Masih Yad gave a briefing on the Independence Movement of Pakistan.

At the end, Sweets were distributed among the congregation, and the participants of this ceremony congratulated each other on the 62nd Anniversary of Pakistan.

Diocesan Staff Serving the Homeless

Diocesan Development and Relief is actively engaged in caring the Christian families staying at Christian Vocational Training Center, Mardan. While another twenty-nine (29) Christian IDP families, staying with their relatives, are also supported by the Diocese of Peshawar.

At CVTC Mardan the Diocesan Field staff, Rabnawaz, and Riaz are residing with the IDPs at the Diocesan Relief Camp to ensure that the IDPs are getting proper attention. The Diocesan Field Staff is also assisted by the local Diocesan Volunteers, while the Senior Development staff supervise and monitor the overall progress of the Camp activities.

Aggricultural Development for the Earthquake Victims



Tractor, donated by the Diocese for Earthquake Victims

Peshawar Diocese has always helped the Earthquake victims 2005, as per their needs and requirements. In the past, they have been given livestock, and have been provided with educational and health facilities. The local community has also been helped to form their own community based organization (CBO), which looks after their small businesses, and the profit earned through business goes to the CBO, which helps to look after their immediate needs by themselves.

Recently, Development and Relief Secor of the Diocese donated them yet another 'Tractor with Accessories' to further develop their agricultural methods and fulfill their needs. The local community thanked the Diocese for this facility and showed their happiness, as it will help them to grow more crops and become self-sufficient in their food supplies.

IDP's Cricket Match

The Diocesan Development and Relief arranged a 'Cricket Match' between the Swat and Malakand Youth. The IDPs from Swat and Malakand were enthusiastic of the sports activity.

After winning the toss, the Malakand Youth elected to bat first. In a stipulated twelve over match, they set up a target of seventy-four (74) runs for the Swat team. Initially the Swat Youth was struggling in their chase to achieve the target, as the Malakand Youth played very well but at the end of the day, Swat Youth were the winners.

The Elders, present on the occasion awarded medals to the players and appreciated the Diocesan effort for providing them Sports and leisure activities at the Camp.