

## Issue of forced conversion to Islam in Pakistan: A legislative and Islamic Perspective

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### ABSTRACT

Forced conversion to Islam in Pakistan is a burning issue in religious and Human rights activist circles in Pakistan, as well as across the globe. Last year there raised an issue of forced conversions of Hindus to Islam in Sindh province of Pakistan; it also attracted the attention of Human rights activists and religious circles of the world. After protest and long debate Sindh Assembly outlawed forced conversion. According to sacred text of Islam, forced conversion is also forbidden. How, then, in an Islamic State like Pakistan, people are forced to convert to Islam? This paper aims to provide comprehensive look on the issue of forced conversion to Islam in Pakistan and tends to investigate the matter in legislative and Islamic perspectives.

**Key words:** *Forced conversion, Sindh, Pakistan, Islamic and legal perspective,*

### 1. Introduction

There is a popular narrative in most of Muslim religious circles that Islam is against the forced conversion of people to Islam. Some people derive from the sacred text of Islam that Islam does not reject the forced conversion. In Pakistan we have an issue of forced conversion. Last year in Sindh province of Pakistan this issue rose. Hindues of Sindh are of the view that Some Muslims are converting their young ones to Islam forcibly. After protest Sindh Assembly outlawed this conversion. Some religious personalities of Pakistan opposed this law against forced conversion. Question is if Islam prohibited forced conversion, then how this occurred and how is justified and which are the grounds to declare this conversion outlawed by an Assembly of Islamic state. Here we investigate the matter in detail.

## 2. Islam on forced conversion

If we read the sacred text we found number of places where forced conversion is prohibited and matter of creed and faith is left on behalf of one's will. Here we quote some of the verses of the Quran on the subject.

1. In terms of religion, there is no compulsion; Right path has been made clear from the wrong path. So the person who disbelieves in false gods and believes in Allah, he has grasped the strong handhold. (2:256)
2. And if you denied, many nations before you have been denied, the duty of the messenger is just to give the message of Allah clearly. (29:18)
3. Remind! You are only a reminder; you are not a dictator over them. (88:21-22)
4. Had your lord willed, all the people on the earth believed. Would you the force the people that they become believers? (10:99)
5. We know what they are saying; you are not a dictator over them. Just remind by the Quran, the person who fears of my warning.(50:45)

These are a few verses of the Quran from number of verses, which show that according to the Quran forced conversion cannot be justified.

## 3. Constitution of Pakistan gives the freedom of faith

According to the constitution of Islamic Republic of Pakistan, minorities have the freedom of faith and creed. They are free to worship in their temples, churches etc according to their religion. Article 2 A of the constitution clearly allows the minorities to practice their religion and develop their culture. Founder of Pakistan Quad-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah in his speech of 11 August 1947 also ensure these rights of none Muslims of the country.

## 4. Issue of forced conversion in Sindh

Contrary to mentioned teaching and rulings of Islam, speech of Quad-e-Azam and constitution of Pakistan, forced conversion to Islam in Pakistan is undeniable, According to some reports ever year 1000 girls are forcibly converted to Islam in Pakistan. (The News July 15, 2015) According to World Watch Monitor, an International Organization, forced conversions of minority woman have significantly increased over the years. (Daily Times, December 1, 2016 ) Last year in sindh province of Pakistan many Hindus especially young girls were converted to Islam by force.

## 4. Bill against the forced conversion in Sindh Assembly and its approval.

Hindus and other minorities in Pakistan protested against this sort of conversion. This protest and complaints made the ground against this action. A bill of protection of minorities tabled by Nand Kumar of Pakistan Muslim League Functional which unanimously passed by sindh Assembly. Thus under the title of Sindh criminal Law protection of minorities bill 2015, Sindh assembly outlawed the forced conversion to Islam. The law after debate and discussion passed by sindh Assembly in November 2016.

## 5. Focus of the Law

The mentioned law against forced conversion focused on the right of freedom of religion, freedom to marry and a specific age of conversion. According to the law:

1. Forced conversion is an issue across the sindh which is necessary to eradicate.
2. To forcibly convert someone from his religion to Islam is an offence.
3. All persons and minorities have the right of freedom of religion.
4. All persons have the right to marry according to their choice.
5. No person can change his religion until he reaches the age of 18 years.

## 6. Punishment on forced conversion

According to the law punishment of forced conversion is ranging as under:

1. Five years imprisonment
2. Life imprisonment
3. Fine to be paid to the victim

Law states that the accused person will also considered a guilty of kidnapping and abduction. He also considered a compeller of woman for marriage. So he can be punished under these very relevant laws.

## 7. Reaction against the law

Some of religious activists and radical forces in Pakistan have reacted against anti conversion law, claiming that it is against Islam and constitution of Pakistan. Moulana Samiulhaq of JUI S demanded that legislature should be dissolved on this unislamic law.

## 7. Constitution and law on forced conversion

As for the question, whether the law of Sindh Assembly and constitution of Pakistan compatible on the issue of forced conversion, is concerned? We can say that basically they are compatible. As it is mentioned above, constitution of Islamic Republic of Pakistan, give the minorities freedom of faith and creed. They are free to worship in their temples, churches etc according to their religion. Article 2 A of the constitution clearly allows the minorities to practice their religion and develop their culture. Founder of Pakistan Quad-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah in his speech of 11 August 1947 also ensure these rights of none Muslims of the country. So the claim that this law is against the constitution of Pakistan is not just.

## 8. Methodology

This study is mostly based on Quran, Constitution of Pakistan, Copy of Minorities protection bill 2015 presented Sindh Assembly, News paper reports. Account of religious text and constitution and media reports, touched briefly for the purpose, is critically evaluated without altering the actuality. It provides the readers necessary information on forced conversion to Islam in Pakistan; law of Sindh Assembly on forced conversion; Islamic religious point of view; the stance of constitution of Pakistan on forced conversion.

## 9. Conclusion and Recommendation

This study provides a comprehensive look into the issue of forced conversion in Pakistan especially in Sindh province of Pakistan. It concludes that forced conversion in Pakistan is a reality; in Sindh province of Pakistan Hindu especially girls are forced to convert to Islam. Unfortunately this practice is justified on the name of religion and constitution while both these texts are against forced conversion. Some Muslim extremists; so called religious preachers or leaders do this by misinterpretation of religion and constitution. Sindh Assembly rightly outlawed the forced conversion; this is not against the constitution of Pakistan. To stop this forced conversion punishment according to the law should be practiced strictly and stance of Islam and constitution of Pakistan should be presented to the masses in real context.

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