

A LEGAL, CONSTITUTIONAL, AND HUMAN RIGHTS STUDY
WITH CASE ANALYSES AND REFORM RECOMMENDATIONS

BETWEEN FAITH — AND — COERCION

FORCED CONVERSION,
CHILD MARRIAGE,
AND THE PERSECUTION OF
CHRISTIAN GIRLS
IN PAKISTAN

“

*“Speak up for those
who cannot speak for themselves,
for the rights of all
who are destitute.”*

— PROVERBS 31:8

”

DR. EMANUEL ADIL GHOURI



BETWEEN FAITH AND COERCION

**Forced Conversion, Child Marriage,
and the Persecution of Christian Girls in Pakistan**

*A Legal, Constitutional, and Human Rights Study
with Case Analyses and Reform Recommendations*

REVISED AND EXPANDED EDITION

By
DR. EMANUEL ADIL GHOURI



A comprehensive study of documented cases,
constitutional guarantees, Pakistani law,
and international human rights standards
concerning religious minorities.

*“Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves,
for the rights of all who are destitute.”*

– PROVERBS 31:8

SIALKOT, PAKISTAN
A CITY WHERE CHRISTIANITY TOOK ROOT
AND SPREAD IN SOUTH ASIA

Christian Daughters in the Shadow of Fear

*A Legal and Human Rights Analysis of Forced
Conversion and Child Marriage in Pakistan*

Author

Dr. Emanuel Adil Ghouri

Copyright

Christian Daughters in the Shadow of Fear

A Legal and Human Rights Analysis of Forced Conversion and Child Marriage in Pakistan

Revised and Expanded Edition

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This publication is intended for educational, scholarly, legal, and human rights purposes. Every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of the information presented. References to legislation, judicial decisions, government reports, media publications, and documented cases are based on sources available to the author at the time of writing. The author accepts full responsibility for the interpretation, analysis, and conclusions presented in this work.

The opinions expressed in this book are those of the author and are offered in the interest of promoting informed discussion on religious freedom, children's rights, constitutional protections, the rule of law, and internationally recognized human rights. The inclusion of individuals, institutions, organizations, legislation, judicial decisions, or reported cases is solely for purposes of research, documentation, legal analysis, and public education.

This revised and expanded edition includes updated research, additional documented case studies, revised legal analysis, improved language and organization, and a comprehensive examination of the Maria Shahbaz case within the broader framework of constitutional law and international human rights.

AI Assistance Statement

Artificial Intelligence (AI) was responsibly used during the preparation of this revised and expanded edition as an editorial and language-support tool. AI assistance contributed to language refinement, grammatical correction, structural organization, formatting, and editorial suggestions under the direct supervision of the author.

All research, factual content, legal analysis, documented case studies, interpretations, conclusions, and opinions presented in this book remain the sole intellectual responsibility of **Dr. Emanuel Adil Ghouri**, who has reviewed, verified, and approved the final manuscript.

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Dr. Emanuel Adil Ghouri

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Dedication

This book is dedicated

to every Christian girl whose childhood was interrupted by fear, whose freedom was challenged by coercion, and whose future was placed at risk through forced conversion, child marriage, abduction, or violence.

It is dedicated to the parents and families who have endured profound grief while seeking justice for their daughters, often in the face of overwhelming legal, social, and institutional obstacles.

It is also dedicated to the lawyers, judges, journalists, researchers, human rights defenders, church leaders, civil society organizations, and all those who continue to uphold the principles of justice, religious freedom, the rule of law, and the inherent dignity of every human being.

May this work honor the courage of those who have refused to surrender hope, inspire meaningful legal and social reform, and encourage every reader to stand for the protection of children, the defense of religious liberty, and the equal rights of all citizens.

"Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves; ensure justice for those being crushed. Yes, speak up for the poor and helpless, and see that they get justice."

Proverbs 31:8–9 (NLT)

Author's Note

This book was born out of years of witnessing the pain, fear, and uncertainty experienced by Christian families whose daughters were reportedly abducted, subjected to forced conversion, or compelled into child marriage. As a journalist, social worker, and human rights advocate, I encountered numerous families who struggled to obtain justice despite pursuing every available legal avenue. Their experiences convinced me that this issue deserved careful documentation, objective analysis, and sustained public discussion.

The purpose of this book is not to promote hostility toward any religion, community, or nation. Nor is it intended to question the sincere religious beliefs of any individual. Rather, it seeks to examine documented cases through the lenses of constitutional law, statutory law, human rights, and the rule of law. Whenever allegations of abduction, forced conversion, or child marriage arise, they deserve to be investigated fairly, impartially, and in accordance with the principles of justice that protect every citizen regardless of religion, ethnicity, or social background.

The preparation of this work has drawn upon a wide range of sources, including court judgments, constitutional provisions, legislation, official records, government statements, parliamentary debates, reports published by national and international human rights organizations, academic studies, newspaper archives, and documented case histories. Every effort has been made to present information accurately and responsibly. Where differing interpretations exist, the intention has been to encourage informed legal and scholarly discussion rather than to reach conclusions unsupported by evidence.

This revised and expanded edition has been substantially improved over the original publication. The language has been professionally revised, repetitive material has been consolidated, the organization has been strengthened, and additional legal and historical analysis has been incorporated. It also includes updated information on recent judicial developments, expanded documentation of significant cases, and a comprehensive legal and human rights analysis of the Maria Shahbaz case, which has become one of the most widely discussed cases relating to alleged forced conversion and child marriage involving a Christian minor in Pakistan.

Although this book focuses primarily on cases involving Christian girls, it also recognizes that forced marriage, coercion, and violence against women and children affect people from different religious and social backgrounds. Every victim deserves equal protection under the law, and every allegation deserves an impartial investigation. The principles of justice, human dignity, and religious freedom are universal values that transcend religious, political, and ethnic differences.

My hope is that this book will serve as a reliable resource for judges, lawyers, legislators, policymakers, researchers, journalists, church leaders, students, human rights advocates, and all readers seeking a deeper understanding of this complex issue. If this study contributes, even in a small measure, to strengthening the protection of vulnerable children, promoting legal reform, encouraging responsible public dialogue, and advancing the cause of justice, then its purpose will have been fulfilled.

I remain deeply grateful to all those who have documented these cases, supported victims, pursued justice through the courts, and continued to advocate for the protection of religious freedom and children's rights. Their courage and perseverance have made this work possible.

Any errors or omissions that remain are entirely my own responsibility.

Dr. Emanuel Adil Ghouri

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Preface

The protection of children, the safeguarding of religious freedom, and the administration of justice are among the defining responsibilities of every democratic and civilized society. When these principles are undermined, the consequences extend far beyond individual victims, affecting families, communities, public institutions, and ultimately the moral conscience of a nation. It is from this conviction that this book has been written—a comprehensive legal and human rights study of the reported incidents of forced conversion, child marriage, and the continuing struggle for justice faced by Christian girls in Pakistan.

During the past several decades, reports of alleged forced conversion and child marriage involving members of Pakistan's religious minority communities have attracted increasing attention from churches, legal experts, human rights organizations, journalists, policymakers, and international institutions. Numerous documented cases have raised important questions concerning the protection of children, the right to freedom of religion or belief, equal protection under the law, and the effectiveness of constitutional and judicial safeguards. Although each case presents its own legal and factual circumstances, one principle remains universal: every child deserves protection from coercion, violence, exploitation, and unlawful deprivation of liberty.

This book is neither an attack upon any religion nor an attempt to create division between communities. It does not question the sincerely held religious beliefs of individuals, nor does it seek to undermine peaceful coexistence within a pluralistic society. Rather, it is an appeal for justice grounded in the Constitution of Pakistan, the rule of law, internationally recognized human rights standards, and the inherent dignity of every human being. The objective is to encourage informed discussion, careful legal analysis, responsible policymaking, and constructive reforms that strengthen the protection of vulnerable children while promoting equality, mutual respect, and religious freedom.

Drawing upon constitutional provisions, statutory law, judicial decisions, parliamentary debates, government statements, documented case histories, academic research, and reports published by national and international organizations, this

volume presents a comprehensive examination of one of the most challenging human rights issues confronting religious minorities in Pakistan. Rather than relying upon isolated incidents, the study places individual cases within their broader historical, constitutional, legal, and social contexts, enabling readers to understand both the immediate circumstances of the victims and the institutional challenges surrounding the administration of justice.

This revised and expanded edition substantially strengthens the original work. The language has been professionally revised, repetitive material has been consolidated, the legal discussion has been expanded, and recent developments have been incorporated throughout the book. It also includes a comprehensive legal and human rights analysis of the Maria Shahbaz case, whose judicial proceedings have become one of the most significant contemporary discussions concerning alleged forced conversion and child marriage involving a Christian minor in Pakistan. The inclusion of this case enables readers to examine broader constitutional questions relating to the protection of children, evidentiary standards, judicial interpretation, and the implementation of existing laws.

This study is intended for a broad readership, including judges, lawyers, legislators, policymakers, scholars, journalists, church leaders, human rights advocates, students, and all readers interested in the relationship between law, religious freedom, and the protection of vulnerable communities. It is hoped that the research presented here will contribute to informed public dialogue, encourage evidence-based policymaking, and support continued efforts to strengthen legal protections for children and religious minorities without compromising the principles of justice, equality, and due process.

I am deeply grateful to the many researchers, journalists, lawyers, church leaders, human rights defenders, and civil society organizations whose commitment to documenting these cases has preserved an important historical record. Their work has provided valuable material for legal research and public discussion, and their dedication continues to inspire those who seek justice through peaceful and lawful means.

It is my sincere hope that this book will serve not merely as a record of painful realities but as a constructive contribution to the ongoing pursuit of justice, legal accountability, religious freedom, and the protection of every child's inherent dignity.

May it encourage thoughtful scholarship, meaningful legal reform, responsible public dialogue, and a renewed commitment to ensuring that every citizen—regardless of religion, ethnicity, or social status—enjoys equal protection under the law.

Dr. Emanuel Adil Ghouri

A Time for Change

Dr. Emanuel Adil Ghouri's *Christian Daughters in the Shadow of Fear* presents a compelling and timely examination of one of the most sensitive human rights issues confronting Pakistan today. Drawing upon his experience as both a journalist and a social worker, the author gives voice to Christian girls and their families who, according to documented reports, have experienced abduction, forced conversion, and child marriage. His work seeks not only to document these cases but also to encourage serious legal, social, and humanitarian reflection.

The mistreatment of women has a long and painful history across the Indian subcontinent. Throughout different historical periods, women from various religious and social communities have suffered violence, discrimination, and exploitation. At the time of Pakistan's creation, many Christians chose to become citizens of the new state because they believed in the vision articulated by Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah—that every citizen, regardless of religion, would enjoy equal rights and freedom under the law. That vision is reflected both in Pakistan's constitutional principles and in the Islamic teaching that faith should never be imposed through coercion.

The author examines numerous documented cases involving Christian girls who were reportedly abducted, compelled to convert, and married while still minors. These accounts raise important legal and human rights questions concerning child protection, due process, access to justice, and the responsibilities of state institutions. Dr. Ghouri also explores why, in many reported cases, victims and their families believe that existing legal safeguards have failed to provide adequate protection.

Although the book focuses on Pakistan, the broader issues it raises extend far beyond one country. Around the world, societies continue to struggle with the misuse of religion, political influence, and social power to justify discrimination or violence against vulnerable communities. Whether expressed through religious extremism, ethnic nationalism, or political populism, such abuses undermine the fundamental values of compassion, justice, and respect for human dignity that lie at the heart of every great religious tradition.

One of the strengths of this book is that it goes beyond documenting individual cases. Dr. Ghouri also considers practical responses to these challenges. He discusses the potential role of legislators, courts, civil society organizations, religious leaders, the international community, and Pakistan's Christian diaspora in strengthening legal protections for vulnerable girls. His call for comprehensive legislation addressing forced conversion and child marriage reflects his conviction that justice must be supported not only by moral concern but also by effective legal safeguards.

This book reminds us that the struggle for justice is ultimately a struggle for the protection of human dignity. Every child deserves security, every family deserves equal protection under the law, and every society bears a responsibility to defend the rights of its most vulnerable members. Dr. Ghouri has made an important contribution by bringing these issues together in a carefully documented and thought-provoking study.

I commend this work to scholars, legal professionals, policymakers, church leaders, human rights advocates, and all readers concerned with religious freedom, children's rights, and the rule of law. It is my hope that this book will encourage informed discussion and contribute to meaningful reforms that strengthen justice and protect the dignity of every child.

Prof. Robert Schmidt

A Call for Justice and Human Dignity

It is with great appreciation that I welcome the publication of **Christian Daughters in the Shadow of Fear** by **Dr. Emanuel Adil Ghouri**. This important work addresses one of the most pressing human rights concerns affecting vulnerable Christian girls in Pakistan. By bringing together documented cases, legal analysis, and historical context, the author has produced a timely and meaningful contribution to the ongoing discussion of religious freedom, child protection, and the rule of law.

Throughout this book, Dr. Ghouri draws attention to reported incidents of forced marriage and forced religious conversion involving Christian girls, many of whom were minors at the time of the alleged offences. These cases have generated concern not only within Pakistan but also among churches, human rights organizations, legal experts, and members of the international community. The author's careful documentation encourages readers to examine these issues through the principles of justice, human dignity, and equal protection under the law.

One of the most significant themes of this book is the protection of children. Every society has a moral and legal responsibility to safeguard children from coercion, exploitation, and violence. Allegations involving the abduction of minor girls, disputed conversions, and underage marriages deserve thorough, impartial, and transparent investigation in accordance with both domestic law and internationally recognized human rights standards. Where legal protections are inadequate or inconsistently applied, meaningful reform becomes an essential responsibility of the state.

The author also raises important questions concerning the implementation of existing legislation relating to child marriage and the protection of religious minorities. His discussion highlights the continuing need for effective legal safeguards, impartial law enforcement, and judicial processes that inspire confidence among all citizens regardless of their religious identity.

Beyond documenting individual cases, this book serves as a broader appeal for justice. It reminds readers that the protection of religious freedom and the dignity of every child are not merely concerns of one community but universal principles that should unite all people of goodwill. Lasting peace and social harmony can only flourish where

justice is administered fairly and the rights of vulnerable citizens are protected without discrimination.

I sincerely hope that this book will encourage constructive dialogue among legislators, judges, lawyers, policymakers, religious leaders, educators, and human rights advocates. It is my prayer that it will contribute to stronger legal protections, greater public awareness, and renewed efforts to ensure that every child in Pakistan may grow up in safety, dignity, and freedom.

I warmly congratulate Dr. Emanuel Adil Ghouri on producing this important and timely work. May it serve as a valuable resource for researchers, legal professionals, church leaders, and all those committed to promoting justice, protecting children, and defending the fundamental rights and freedoms of every human being.

Rev. Kim Ho-kyu
Korea Representative
Group Loving Pakistan
Seongsiwha Church
11 June 2026

Truth, Justice, and the Protection of the Vulnerable

It is a privilege to commend **Christian Daughters in the Shadow of Fear** by **Dr. Emanuel Adil Ghouri**, a timely and deeply significant contribution to the study of religious freedom, children's rights, and human dignity. Even the title of this book immediately evokes compassion for the countless young girls whose lives have reportedly been disrupted by abduction, coercion, forced conversion, and child marriage. As parents, Christians, and citizens concerned with justice, we cannot remain indifferent to the suffering of vulnerable children.

Drawing upon extensive documentation, legal records, media reports, and human rights research, Dr. Ghouri presents a comprehensive examination of one of the most challenging issues confronting religious minorities in Pakistan. His work goes beyond recounting individual tragedies by exploring the broader legal, constitutional, and institutional questions raised by these reported incidents. The result is a carefully researched study that deserves the attention of scholars, legal professionals, policymakers, church leaders, and human rights advocates alike.

One of the strengths of this book is its careful explanation of how allegations of forced conversion and child marriage often intersect with questions of law enforcement, judicial procedure, and the protection of children's rights. The author discusses concerns raised in documented cases where families have presented evidence relating to the age of minor girls while courts have been required to weigh conflicting documentary evidence and legal arguments. Whether one approaches these cases from a legal, humanitarian, or theological perspective, the need for impartial justice and due process remains fundamental.

Dr. Ghouri also reminds readers that the misuse of religion to justify injustice contradicts the highest moral teachings shared by the world's great faith traditions. History teaches that religious communities themselves have experienced persecution, discrimination, and violations of fundamental freedoms. That shared history should inspire all believers to defend the rights of others rather than remain silent when vulnerable people suffer.

This book also carries an important international message. Although it focuses on Pakistan, the principles it discusses—religious liberty, equal protection under the law, the dignity of women and children, and the responsibility of governments to protect

vulnerable citizens—are universal concerns. Every democratic society is ultimately judged by how faithfully it protects those who possess the least social, political, or economic power.

As Christians, we are reminded throughout Scripture that justice is not merely an abstract legal principle but an expression of faithful obedience to God. Our Lord Jesus Christ consistently demonstrated compassion toward the oppressed, defended those who had no voice, and called His followers to love their neighbours without discrimination. That same commitment to justice should inspire our response to every allegation of abuse, exploitation, or coercion.

I sincerely hope that this important work will be widely read not only in Pakistan but throughout the international community. It deserves careful consideration by legislators, judges, lawyers, educators, church leaders, journalists, and all who seek to strengthen the rule of law and protect the rights of children and religious minorities. By encouraging informed discussion and responsible legal reform, Dr. Ghouri has made a valuable contribution to the ongoing pursuit of justice and human dignity.

I commend **Christian Daughters in the Shadow of Fear** to all readers who believe that truth, compassion, and justice must always prevail over fear, violence, and injustice. May this book inspire thoughtful dialogue, encourage meaningful reform, and strengthen our collective commitment to defending the dignity and freedom of every human being.

Rod Taylor
National Leader
Christian Heritage Party of Canada

PART I

Historical, Constitutional, and Legal Foundations

Chapter One

Historical Foundations of Forced Marriage and Religious Conversion (1857–1947)

Introduction

The history of the Indian subcontinent is marked by periods of political conflict, imperial conquest, communal tension, and profound social transformation.

Throughout these centuries, women frequently bore a disproportionate share of the suffering associated with war, social instability, and patriarchal customs. Regardless of religion, ethnicity, or social status, women often became the most vulnerable members of society during times of conflict and political upheaval.

The modern discussion concerning forced marriage and religious conversion cannot be understood without examining this broader historical context. Practices involving the abduction of women, coerced marriages, and religious conversion did not emerge suddenly in contemporary Pakistan. Rather, they evolved within a complex historical environment shaped by customary traditions, colonial policies, communal rivalries, and the political movements that transformed the Indian subcontinent during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

This chapter examines the historical background of these developments from the aftermath of the Indian Rebellion of 1857 until the Partition of British India in 1947. It explores the social customs that affected women, the religious reform movements that emerged during the colonial period, the responses of Muslim religious and political leaders, and the humanitarian consequences of Partition. Understanding this historical background provides an essential foundation for the legal and human rights analysis presented in the chapters that follow.

Women as Victims of War, Conflict, and Social Violence

Throughout recorded history, armed conflict has frequently exposed women to violence, exploitation, displacement, and coercion. Across many civilizations—not

only in South Asia but throughout the world—the defeat of one community by another often resulted in women becoming victims of sexual violence, forced marriage, enslavement, or other forms of abuse.

The Indian subcontinent was not immune to these realities. Political conflict, communal violence, and tribal customs sometimes placed women at the center of disputes between families, clans, and communities. Rather than being treated as independent individuals possessing inherent dignity and legal rights, women were often regarded as instruments through which honour, revenge, reconciliation, or political dominance could be expressed.

These historical realities provide an important context for understanding later discussions concerning forced marriage and religious conversion. They also demonstrate that violence against women has deep historical roots extending beyond any single religion, political ideology, or historical period.

Harmful Traditional Practices

Long before the establishment of Pakistan, several customary practices affecting women existed in different parts of the Indian subcontinent. Although many of these customs varied between regions and communities, they shared one common characteristic: they subordinated the rights and welfare of women to tribal, familial, or social interests.

Vani

One such custom was **Vani**, under which a girl could be given in marriage to another family as compensation for a crime or dispute committed by a male relative. The girl herself had no meaningful opportunity to consent to the arrangement. In many reported cases, age differences between spouses were substantial, and the practice deprived girls of education, personal liberty, and the freedom to determine their own future.

Swara

Closely related to Vani is the practice known as **Swara**, observed in certain tribal communities. Under this custom, girls were similarly offered in marriage to settle blood feuds or tribal disputes. Although defended by some as a mechanism for conflict resolution, Swara has been widely criticized by legal scholars and human

rights advocates because it treats girls as compensation rather than as persons possessing independent rights.

Karo Kari

The practice commonly known as **Karo Kari**, often associated with so-called "honor" crimes, has historically resulted in severe violence against women accused of bringing dishonor upon their families. Allegations of illicit relationships—whether proven or not—could expose women to serious harm, including murder. Such practices have been condemned both under Pakistani law and by international human rights organizations.

Sati

Another historical practice associated with parts of pre-colonial India was **Sati**, in which a widow was expected—or, in some historical instances, compelled—to die upon her husband's funeral pyre. Although the practice was formally abolished during British rule, it remains an important historical example of the extreme vulnerability women experienced under certain social traditions.

Chapter Two

Pakistan After Independence: Religious Freedom and Minority Rights

Introduction

The creation of Pakistan on 14 August 1947 marked a defining moment in the history of South Asia. For millions of Muslims, it represented the realization of a long-standing political aspiration. For religious minorities—including Christians, Hindus, Sikhs, Parsis, and others—it also raised expectations that the new state would guarantee equality, religious liberty, and protection under the rule of law.

Many Christian leaders actively supported the movement for Pakistan. Their support was based largely upon the assurances repeatedly given by Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah that every citizen, irrespective of religion, caste, ethnicity, or social background, would enjoy equal rights and equal protection under the law. These assurances formed an important part of the vision of Pakistan as a constitutional state founded upon justice, citizenship, and religious freedom.

This chapter examines the development of minority rights after independence, the constitutional ideals that shaped the new nation, and the emergence of public concern regarding allegations of forced marriage and religious conversion involving members of religious minority communities.

The Vision of Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah

Muhammad Ali Jinnah consistently emphasized that citizenship should not be determined by religious identity. His address to the Constituent Assembly on 11 August 1947 remains one of the most significant statements concerning religious freedom and equal citizenship in Pakistan's constitutional history.

Jinnah envisioned a nation in which every citizen would enjoy equal legal protection regardless of religious affiliation. His commitment to equality before the law continues to influence constitutional interpretation and discussions concerning the protection of minority rights.

For many Christians, this vision provided confidence that the newly established state would safeguard their lives, property, religious freedom, and civil liberties. As a result, Christian political leaders chose to participate actively in the nation-building process during Pakistan's formative years.

Constitutional Development After Independence

Following independence, Pakistan experienced significant constitutional and political changes. The adoption of the Objectives Resolution in 1949 and subsequent constitutional developments shaped the relationship between religion and the state.

Over the following decades, constitutional amendments, political transitions, and changing legal interpretations influenced public discussions concerning religious freedom, minority rights, and the role of religion within Pakistan's legal system.

These developments continue to be examined by constitutional scholars, historians, and legal experts because they affect the interpretation and implementation of fundamental rights guaranteed under the Constitution.

Religious Minorities in Pakistan

Religious minorities have contributed significantly to Pakistan's educational, medical, military, legal, social, and public institutions since independence.

At the same time, minority communities have periodically expressed concern regarding discrimination, religious intolerance, and unequal access to justice. These concerns have been documented by Pakistani civil society organizations, journalists, legal practitioners, and international human rights institutions.

The protection of minority rights therefore remains an important constitutional and public policy issue that extends beyond any single community.

The Emergence of Allegations of Forced Marriage and Religious Conversion

During the later decades of Pakistan's history, allegations involving the abduction of minor girls, disputed religious conversions, and child marriages increasingly attracted national and international attention.

Human rights organizations, journalists, church leaders, lawyers, and researchers documented numerous reported incidents involving Christian and Hindu girls.

Although individual cases differ significantly in their factual circumstances and legal outcomes, many reports identify recurring issues concerning:

- age determination;
- consent;
- registration of marriages;
- documentary evidence;
- police investigations;
- judicial proceedings; and
- protection of vulnerable children.

These allegations have generated extensive legal debate and have prompted repeated calls for legislative reform and stronger institutional safeguards.

Social and Political Developments

Pakistan's political history has included periods of democratic government, military administration, constitutional reform, and significant legislative change. These developments have shaped public discussion concerning religious freedom, minority rights, and child protection.

Scholars continue to debate the extent to which political, social, economic, and religious factors have influenced the implementation of constitutional guarantees relating to equality before the law and freedom of religion.

Rather than viewing these issues in isolation, many researchers emphasize the importance of strengthening legal institutions, improving governance, and ensuring that existing laws are implemented consistently and impartially.

The Evolution of Public Debate

Public discussion concerning forced marriage and religious conversion has expanded considerably over the past two decades.

National newspapers, television networks, academic institutions, churches, human rights organizations, lawyers, parliamentarians, and international organizations have all contributed to increasing awareness of these issues.

This growing public debate has encouraged renewed examination of child protection laws, marriage legislation, criminal investigations, constitutional guarantees, and Pakistan's obligations under international human rights law.

Chapter Conclusion

The history of Pakistan since independence demonstrates both the enduring strength of its constitutional ideals and the continuing challenges involved in implementing them effectively. The vision articulated by the nation's founders continues to provide an important constitutional framework for protecting religious freedom, equality before the law, and the rights of all citizens.

At the same time, continuing allegations concerning forced marriage and disputed religious conversion have prompted sustained national and international discussion regarding legal reform, institutional accountability, and the protection of vulnerable children. Understanding these developments provides the necessary background for examining the constitutional and legal framework governing these issues, which forms the subject of the next chapter.

Chapter Three

Constitutional and Legal Protection of Religious Minorities

Introduction

The Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan is the supreme law of the nation and the primary source of legal protection for all citizens. It establishes the framework for governance, guarantees fundamental rights, and defines the relationship between the individual and the State. Regardless of religion, ethnicity, language, or gender, every citizen is entitled to the equal protection of the law and to the enjoyment of the constitutional rights guaranteed by the Constitution.

Questions concerning alleged forced conversion, child marriage, religious liberty, parental rights, and the protection of minors cannot be examined solely from social or religious perspectives. They must also be evaluated within Pakistan's constitutional framework and in light of the country's statutory laws and international legal obligations.

This chapter examines the constitutional provisions most relevant to religious minorities, freedom of religion, equality before the law, the protection of children, and access to justice. It also considers the responsibilities of State institutions in implementing these constitutional guarantees.

The Constitution as the Supreme Law

Every democratic constitutional system is founded upon the principle that all public authorities are subject to the Constitution. Government institutions, law enforcement agencies, public officials, and the judiciary must exercise their powers within constitutional limits.

The Constitution of Pakistan recognizes fundamental rights that are intended to protect every citizen without unlawful discrimination. These constitutional guarantees provide the legal foundation upon which legislation relating to marriage, child protection, criminal justice, and religious freedom must be interpreted and applied.

The effective protection of constitutional rights depends not only upon the existence of legal guarantees but also upon their consistent implementation by public institutions.

Equality Before the Law

Equality before the law is one of the central principles of constitutional governance. It requires that every citizen receive equal protection under the law and that legal institutions administer justice impartially and without discrimination.

This principle assumes particular importance in cases involving allegations of forced marriage or religious conversion. Investigations must be conducted objectively, evidence must be evaluated fairly, and judicial decisions must be based upon law rather than religious identity, social status, political influence, or public pressure.

Equal protection of the law strengthens public confidence in the justice system and reinforces the legitimacy of constitutional government.

Freedom of Religion

Freedom of religion occupies an important place within Pakistan's constitutional framework. Individuals are entitled to profess, practice, and manifest their religion in accordance with the Constitution and applicable law.

Where allegations arise concerning religious conversion, courts are often required to determine whether a conversion occurred voluntarily or whether unlawful coercion, intimidation, fraud, or exploitation was involved. Such determinations require careful examination of the facts, the age and legal capacity of the individual concerned, and the surrounding circumstances.

The constitutional protection of religious freedom therefore includes not only the right to adopt a religion freely but also protection against unlawful coercion that undermines genuine freedom of conscience.

Protection of Children

Children enjoy special legal protection because of their age and vulnerability. Their physical safety, education, family life, emotional well-being, and future development require safeguards beyond those applicable to adults.

Where minors are involved in disputes relating to marriage or religious conversion, courts must carefully examine issues relating to age determination, legal capacity, consent, parental responsibility, and the best interests of the child.

Modern child protection law recognizes that minors cannot always exercise fully informed and independent legal judgment. Consequently, legal systems throughout the world provide additional protection designed to safeguard children from exploitation and abuse.

Due Process and Access to Justice

The administration of justice requires more than fair laws; it also requires fair procedures. Due process protects the rights of all parties by ensuring impartial investigations, access to legal representation, fair hearings, judicial independence, and decisions based upon credible evidence.

In cases involving vulnerable children and religious minorities, due process serves two equally important purposes. It protects victims seeking justice while simultaneously safeguarding the legal rights of accused persons through impartial judicial proceedings.

Maintaining this balance is essential for preserving public confidence in the rule of law.

Responsibilities of State Institutions

The protection of constitutional rights is a shared responsibility.

The police are responsible for conducting professional investigations.

Prosecutors must evaluate evidence objectively and pursue justice impartially.

The judiciary must interpret and apply the law independently.

Administrative authorities must ensure that official records, including birth registration and identity documentation, are reliable and accessible.

Child protection institutions must prioritize the safety and welfare of minors throughout legal proceedings.

The effective functioning of these institutions is essential to the practical realization of constitutional guarantees.

Continuing Constitutional Challenges

Although Pakistan possesses an established constitutional framework for the protection of fundamental rights, the implementation of these guarantees continues to present practical challenges. Questions concerning disputed documentary evidence, conflicting claims regarding age, allegations of coercion, and lengthy judicial proceedings require careful legal examination in every individual case.

Strengthening institutional capacity, improving legal education, enhancing investigative procedures, and ensuring equal access to justice remain essential objectives for the continued development of constitutional governance.

Chapter Conclusion

The Constitution of Pakistan provides the legal foundation for protecting religious freedom, equality before the law, human dignity, and the rights of children. These constitutional principles establish the framework within which allegations of forced marriage and religious conversion must be examined.

The following chapter expands this discussion by examining Pakistan's obligations under international human rights law and the standards established by international conventions concerning children, women, religious freedom, and the protection of vulnerable communities.

Constitutional Provision	Subject	Relevance to This Book
Article 9	Security of person	Protection of victims
Article 14	Dignity of man	Human dignity and child protection
Article 20	Freedom to profess religion	Religious liberty and alleged conversions
Article 25	Equality of citizens	Equal protection before the law

Constitutional Provision	Subject	Relevance to This Book
Article 35	Protection of marriage, family, mother, and child	Child welfare and family protection
Article 36	Protection of minorities	Constitutional safeguards for minority communities

Chapter Four

Human Rights and the International Legal Framework

Introduction

The protection of children, the prevention of forced marriage, and the safeguarding of religious freedom are not only matters of domestic law but also subjects of international human rights law. During the twentieth century, the international community developed a comprehensive body of legal instruments designed to protect the dignity, equality, and fundamental rights of every individual, regardless of nationality, religion, ethnicity, or gender.

As a member of the international community, Pakistan has accepted numerous international human rights obligations through treaties, conventions, and declarations. These instruments provide important legal and moral standards for the protection of children, women, and religious minorities. Although international agreements are implemented through domestic legislation and constitutional processes, they serve as valuable benchmarks for evaluating national laws and public policy.

This chapter examines the principal international human rights instruments relevant to allegations of forced marriage, child marriage, religious conversion, and the protection of vulnerable minority communities. It also considers Pakistan's obligations under these international standards and the recommendations made by international human rights organizations.

Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948)

The adoption of the **Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR)** by the United Nations General Assembly in 1948 marked a historic milestone in the recognition of universal human dignity. Although the Declaration is not a treaty, it has profoundly influenced constitutional development, international law, and national legal systems throughout the world.

Several principles contained in the UDHR are directly relevant to the issues examined in this book, including:

- Equality before the law.

- Freedom of thought, conscience, and religion.
- Freedom from discrimination.
- The right to security of person.
- The right to marry only with the free and full consent of the intending spouses.
- Access to justice and an effective legal remedy.

These principles emphasize that human dignity and individual liberty must remain central considerations in every legal system.

Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)

The **Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)** is the principal international treaty concerning the rights and welfare of children. It recognizes that children require special legal protection because of their physical, emotional, and developmental vulnerability.

Among its guiding principles are:

- The best interests of the child.
- Protection from abuse, exploitation, and neglect.
- The right to education.
- Protection from harmful traditional practices.
- Protection from trafficking and unlawful deprivation of liberty.
- Respect for the child's identity, family life, and development.

The CRC encourages States to adopt legislative, administrative, and judicial measures to ensure that children receive appropriate protection throughout legal proceedings.

Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)

The **Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)** seeks to eliminate discrimination against women in political, economic, educational, social, and family life.

In relation to the subject of this book, CEDAW encourages States to:

- Eliminate discrimination against women and girls.
- Promote equality before the law.
- Protect women from violence and exploitation.
- Ensure that marriage is entered into only with free and informed consent.
- Strengthen legal protections against harmful practices affecting women and girls.

These principles reinforce the importance of protecting vulnerable girls from coercion and ensuring equal access to justice.

International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR)

The **International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR)** establishes legally binding obligations concerning civil and political rights.

Among the rights most relevant to this study are:

- Freedom of religion or belief.
- Freedom of conscience.
- Equality before the law.
- Protection against arbitrary detention.
- The right to a fair trial.
- Effective legal remedies for violations of fundamental rights.

These guarantees emphasize that any allegation involving coercion, unlawful detention, or restrictions upon religious freedom must be examined through fair and impartial legal procedures.

Pakistan's International Commitments

Pakistan has participated in numerous international human rights initiatives and has undertaken obligations under several important treaties relating to children, women, and fundamental rights.

These commitments encourage the continuous development of domestic legislation, judicial practice, and administrative procedures aimed at strengthening the protection

of vulnerable individuals while respecting constitutional principles and national sovereignty.

The implementation of international standards ultimately depends upon effective domestic institutions, legislative reform where necessary, judicial independence, and consistent enforcement of the law.

International Human Rights Organizations

Over the years, international organizations, treaty-monitoring bodies, and independent human rights institutions have published reports concerning the protection of religious minorities and children in Pakistan.

Although the scope and methodology of these reports vary, many have highlighted recurring concerns regarding:

- Child protection.
- Allegations of forced marriage.
- Allegations of coerced religious conversion.
- Age verification.
- Access to justice.
- Police investigations.
- Judicial procedures.
- Protection of vulnerable minority communities.

These reports have contributed to international dialogue and have encouraged continued discussion regarding legal reform and institutional strengthening.

Balancing Religious Freedom and Child Protection

One of the most challenging legal questions addressed throughout this book is the relationship between religious freedom and the protection of children.

International human rights law recognizes both the freedom of religion and the obligation of States to protect minors from exploitation, coercion, and abuse. Where allegations involve children, courts must carefully evaluate issues relating to legal

capacity, consent, documentary evidence, parental rights, and the best interests of the child.

The objective is not to diminish religious liberty but to ensure that every decision involving a minor is reached through lawful procedures that respect both individual rights and the rule of law.

Chapter Conclusion

International human rights law complements Pakistan's constitutional framework by providing widely recognized principles for the protection of children, women, religious freedom, and human dignity. These standards offer an important framework for evaluating allegations of forced marriage and religious conversion while encouraging States to strengthen legal protections and ensure equal access to justice.

The next part of this book examines the institutions responsible for implementing these legal principles, including the police, the judiciary, human rights organizations, and civil society. Understanding the responsibilities and challenges of these institutions provides an essential bridge between the legal framework discussed in Part I and the documented case studies that follow.

PART II

Institutions, Justice, and the Protection of Vulnerable Minorities

Part Introduction

Law alone cannot guarantee justice. Their effectiveness depends upon the integrity, professionalism, and independence of the institutions responsible for implementing them. In cases involving allegations of forced marriage, child marriage, religious conversion, and the protection of vulnerable children, the administration of justice requires the coordinated efforts of police investigators, prosecutors, the judiciary, child protection agencies, human rights organizations, religious leaders, and civil society.

This part examines the principal institutions involved in investigating allegations, protecting victims, interpreting the law, and safeguarding constitutional rights. It also explores the practical challenges these institutions face and the reforms that have been proposed by legal scholars, human rights organizations, and policymakers.

Understanding the institutional framework is essential before examining the documented case studies presented later in this book. The effectiveness of any legal system depends not only upon sound legislation but also upon fair investigations, impartial judicial proceedings, institutional accountability, and equal access to justice for every citizen.

Chapter Five

Law Enforcement and Criminal Investigation

Introduction

The criminal justice process begins with the investigation of an alleged offence. In cases involving allegations of child abduction, forced marriage, or forced religious conversion, the quality of the initial investigation often determines the direction and outcome of subsequent legal proceedings. Professional police work is therefore essential for protecting victims, preserving evidence, ensuring due process, and maintaining public confidence in the rule of law.

The police are not responsible for determining guilt or innocence; that responsibility belongs to the courts. Their duty is to conduct impartial investigations, collect reliable evidence, identify relevant witnesses, and present the facts objectively to the prosecution and the judiciary. In cases involving children and religious minorities, investigators must exercise particular care to ensure that legal procedures are followed, the rights of all parties are respected, and vulnerable individuals receive appropriate protection.

Registration of Criminal Complaints

The First Information Report (FIR) is often the first formal step in the criminal justice process. Prompt registration of complaints enables investigators to begin collecting evidence, interviewing witnesses, locating missing persons, and initiating legal proceedings.

Delays in reporting or investigating alleged offences may affect the availability of evidence, the recovery of victims, and the overall effectiveness of the investigation. For this reason, timely action is an essential component of effective law enforcement.

Recovery of the Alleged Victim

Where allegations involve the disappearance or abduction of a minor, the immediate recovery and protection of the child become primary investigative priorities.

Police authorities must coordinate with relevant agencies to ensure the child's safety while preserving evidence necessary for subsequent judicial proceedings. Throughout this process, the dignity, privacy, and welfare of the child should remain paramount.

Collection of Documentary Evidence

Cases involving allegations of forced marriage and religious conversion frequently require investigators to examine a wide range of documentary evidence.

Such evidence may include:

- Birth certificates
- School records
- National identity documents
- Marriage certificates
- Medical reports
- Church records
- Statements of parents and witnesses
- Police records

The authenticity, reliability, and legal significance of these documents often become central issues during court proceedings.

Interviewing Witnesses

Professional investigations require careful interviewing of victims, parents, witnesses, medical personnel, religious officials, and other individuals possessing relevant information.

Where children are involved, interviews should be conducted in a manner that minimizes trauma while ensuring the accuracy and reliability of evidence. Investigators must remain impartial and avoid prejudging disputed facts before the completion of the investigation.

Cooperation Between Institutions

Effective criminal investigations require close cooperation among police authorities, prosecutors, forensic specialists, child protection agencies, and the judiciary.

Institutional coordination improves the quality of investigations, reduces unnecessary delays, and strengthens public confidence in the administration of justice.

Challenges in Criminal Investigation

Various reports have identified recurring challenges affecting investigations in cases involving vulnerable children. These include:

- Delays in investigation
- Conflicting documentary evidence
- Difficulties in determining age
- Witness intimidation
- Limited forensic resources
- Social and community pressures
- Delays in judicial proceedings

Addressing these challenges requires continued institutional reform, professional training, improved investigative procedures, and greater coordination among public institutions.

Chapter Conclusion

The effectiveness of criminal investigations directly influences the administration of justice. Fair, impartial, and professional investigations protect not only the rights of victims but also the legal rights of accused persons. Public confidence in the rule of law depends upon investigations that are thorough, objective, and conducted in accordance with constitutional principles and statutory law.

The following chapter examines the role of the judiciary in interpreting the law, evaluating evidence, and safeguarding the constitutional rights of all parties during judicial proceedings.

Chapter Six

The Judiciary, Courts, and the Administration of Justice

Introduction

The judiciary occupies a central position in every constitutional democracy. Courts are entrusted with interpreting the Constitution, safeguarding fundamental rights, resolving disputes, and ensuring that justice is administered impartially. In cases involving allegations of forced marriage, child marriage, religious conversion, and the protection of minors, judicial decisions often determine not only the outcome of individual cases but also the development of legal principles that influence future jurisprudence.

Because these cases frequently involve constitutional rights, statutory interpretation, family law, criminal law, and international human rights principles, judges are required to balance competing legal interests while ensuring that proceedings remain fair, transparent, and consistent with the rule of law.

Judicial Independence

Judicial independence is one of the cornerstones of constitutional governance. Courts must decide cases solely on the basis of law and evidence, free from political influence, religious pressure, public opinion, or institutional interference.

An independent judiciary strengthens public confidence in the legal system by ensuring that justice is administered impartially and according to established legal principles.

Constitutional Responsibilities of the Courts

The courts play several essential roles in protecting constitutional rights.

These include:

- Interpreting constitutional provisions.
- Protecting fundamental rights.
- Reviewing executive and administrative actions.

- Interpreting statutory legislation.
- Ensuring due process.
- Safeguarding the rights of vulnerable people.

In cases involving children, judges must carefully evaluate questions relating to age, consent, legal capacity, documentary evidence, parental rights, and the welfare of the child.

Evaluation of Evidence

Judicial decision-making depends upon reliable evidence.

In cases involving allegations of forced conversion and child marriage, courts frequently examine:

- Birth certificates.
- School records.
- National identity documents.
- Marriage certificates.
- Medical reports.
- Statements of the alleged victim.
- Testimony of parents.
- Witness statements.
- Police investigations.

The credibility, authenticity, and legal weight of each document must be assessed carefully before judicial conclusions are reached.

Child-Centered Justice

Modern legal systems increasingly recognize that children require special procedural safeguards during judicial proceedings.

Where minors are involved, courts should ensure:

- Protection from intimidation.

- Confidential proceedings where appropriate.
- Access to legal representation.
- Psychological support.
- Respect for the child's dignity.
- Consideration of the child's best interests.

These safeguards strengthen both justice and public confidence in judicial institutions.

Challenges Facing the Judiciary

Courts often face complex legal questions involving conflicting documentary evidence, disputed age, allegations of coercion, constitutional interpretation, and competing legal claims.

Additional challenges may include:

- Delays in litigation.
- Witness protection.
- Availability of documentary evidence.
- Public pressure.
- Media attention.
- Balancing religious liberty with child protection.

Addressing these challenges requires continued judicial training, institutional support, and adherence to constitutional principles.

The Rule of Law

The rule of law requires that every individual, regardless of religion, ethnicity, gender, or social status, receives equal protection and equal access to justice.

Judicial decisions should strengthen public confidence by demonstrating impartiality, fairness, transparency, and respect for constitutional rights.

Chapter Conclusion

The judiciary serves as the guardian of constitutional rights and the final interpreter of the law. In cases involving allegations of forced marriage and religious conversion, judicial independence, careful evaluation of evidence, and adherence to due process are essential for protecting both individual rights and the integrity of the legal system.

The following chapter examines the contribution of human rights organizations, civil society institutions, and religious communities in promoting legal reform, protecting vulnerable populations, and strengthening public awareness.

Chapter Seven

Human Rights Organizations, Civil Society, and Religious Institutions

Introduction

The protection of human rights is not the responsibility of governments alone. Civil society organizations, religious institutions, academic researchers, lawyers, journalists, and community leaders all contribute to promoting justice, documenting abuses, supporting victims, and encouraging legal reform.

In Pakistan, many organizations have worked to strengthen the protection of children, religious minorities, and vulnerable communities through research, legal advocacy, public education, humanitarian assistance, and policy engagement.

Human Rights Organizations

Human rights organizations perform several important functions:

- Documenting alleged violations.
- Providing legal assistance.
- Monitoring judicial proceedings.
- Conducting research.
- Publishing reports.
- Promoting legislative reform.
- Raising public awareness.

Their documentation has contributed significantly to national and international understanding of allegations involving child marriage and disputed religious conversion.

Civil Society

Civil society organizations provide an important bridge between communities and public institutions.

Their activities include:

- Community education.
- Victim support.
- Legal counselling.
- Women's rights advocacy.
- Child protection.
- Policy research.
- Public awareness campaigns.

By engaging communities directly, civil society helps strengthen democratic participation and accountability.

Religious Institutions

Religious institutions also play an important role in protecting vulnerable communities.

Churches, mosques, temples, and other faith-based organizations frequently provide:

- Spiritual support.
- Emergency assistance.
- Community counselling.
- Educational programmes.
- Advocacy for justice.

Religious leaders can also promote peaceful dialogue, mutual respect, and cooperation among different communities while discouraging violence and coercion.

Academic Institutions

Universities and research centers contribute through:

- Legal research.
- Human rights studies.

- Public policy analysis.
- Documentation.
- Professional education.

Scholarly research strengthens public debate by providing evidence-based analysis rather than speculation or political rhetoric.

Cooperation Among Institutions

The effective protection of vulnerable communities requires cooperation between:

- Government institutions.
- Police.
- Judiciary.
- Human rights organizations.
- Religious leaders.
- Educational institutions.
- Civil society.

Such cooperation improves both institutional effectiveness and public confidence.

Chapter Conclusion

The combined efforts of civil society, religious institutions, legal professionals, and human rights organizations strengthen democratic accountability and encourage the protection of fundamental rights. Their work complements the responsibilities of public institutions and contributes to a more effective system of justice.

The next chapter examines how media reporting and public opinion influence legal reform, public awareness, and policy development.

Chapter Eight

Media, Public Opinion, and Policy Reform

Introduction

Modern media play a vital role in informing the public, encouraging transparency, and promoting democratic accountability. Reporting on allegations involving forced marriage, child protection, and religious freedom has significantly influenced public discussion in Pakistan and internationally.

Responsible journalism can contribute to justice by informing the public accurately, highlighting institutional challenges, and encouraging constructive policy reform. At the same time, inaccurate or sensational reporting may prejudice legal proceedings, undermine public confidence, or increase social tensions.

The Role of the Media

Professional journalism serves several important public functions:

- Reporting verified information.
- Investigating matters of public interest.
- Promoting transparency.
- Encouraging institutional accountability.
- Giving voice to affected communities.
- Facilitating informed public discussion.

These responsibilities are especially significant when reporting on cases involving vulnerable children.

Public Opinion

Public opinion often influences legislative priorities, institutional reform, and political debate.

However, legal decisions must ultimately be based upon evidence and law rather than media attention or public pressure. Maintaining this distinction protects judicial independence while preserving freedom of expression.

Social Media

Digital platforms have transformed public communication.

They enable:

- Rapid dissemination of information.
- Public advocacy.
- Community mobilization.
- International awareness.

However, they also create challenges relating to misinformation, online harassment, privacy, and the circulation of unverified claims.

Responsible use of social media is therefore essential in cases involving ongoing legal proceedings.

Policy Reform

Constructive policy reform depends upon evidence rather than emotion.

Areas frequently discussed by policymakers and legal experts include:

- Child protection.
- Birth registration.
- Marriage registration.
- Police training.
- Judicial education.
- Witness protection.
- Legal aid.
- Institutional coordination.

Meaningful reform requires cooperation among legislators, judges, government agencies, civil society organizations, religious leaders, and academic institutions.

Public Education

Long-term prevention depends not only upon legal reform but also upon education.

Public awareness programmers can strengthen understanding of:

- Children's rights.
- Constitutional protections.
- Religious freedom.
- Legal procedures.
- Harmful traditional practices.
- Human dignity.

Education encourages lawful conduct while reducing misinformation and prejudice.

Chapter Conclusion

Media, public opinion, and policy reform all influence the broader environment within which justice is administered. When guided by accuracy, fairness, and respect for the rule of law, these forces can strengthen democratic institutions and promote the protection of vulnerable communities.

With the historical, constitutional, legal, and institutional foundations now established, the book turns in the next part to **documented case studies**. These cases provide practical illustrations of the legal principles discussed throughout the preceding chapters and allow readers to examine how constitutional rights, statutory law, judicial reasoning, and human rights standards have been applied in real-world situations.

PART III

Documented Case Studies: Law, Human Rights, and the Protection of Christian Girls in Pakistan

Part Introduction

The following case studies present documented incidents involving Christian girls in Pakistan who were reportedly abducted, subjected to disputed religious conversion, and placed into marriages under circumstances that raised serious legal and human rights concerns. These cases illustrate recurring questions of age determination, consent, police response, documentary evidence, judicial protection, and the vulnerability of minority families seeking justice.

The purpose of these chapters is not to sensationalize individual suffering, but to examine the legal and institutional patterns that emerge from these documented cases. Each case reflects broader questions concerning child protection, religious freedom, family rights, due process, and equal protection under the law.

Chapter 9

Child Marriage, Age Determination, and Judicial Protection

The Arzoo Raja Case

Arzoo Raja, a thirteen-year-old Christian girl from Karachi, was reportedly abducted on October 13, 2020, by Ali Azhar, a forty-four-year-old Muslim man. According to the manuscript, the purpose of the abduction was to force her into marriage and religious conversion.

Her family approached the police for legal action, but they were not provided effective assistance. Two days later, the family was informed that Arzoo had converted to Islam and had married Ali Azhar. When her family sought justice through the courts, the Sindh High Court accepted an affidavit declaring her age to be eighteen and upheld the marriage on October 23, 2020.

The decision caused widespread protest among Christians in Pakistan and in the diaspora. Due to the seriousness of the matter, Arzoo was later transferred to a shelter home on November 2, 2020, and a medical board was ordered to determine her age. The medical board found her to be fourteen years old, confirming that she was a minor.

Despite this finding, Arzoo remained in a shelter home for approximately one year. On December 22, 2021, the Sindh High Court ordered that she be placed with a Christian family at her request. However, no order was issued to register a criminal case against Ali Azhar, even though the medical board's findings raised serious questions under the Sindh Child Marriage Act of 2013.

Legal and Human Rights Significance

The Arzoo Raja case highlights the importance of reliable age determination, careful judicial scrutiny of affidavits, and effective enforcement of child marriage laws. It also demonstrates how delay in police response and uncertainty in judicial handling can deepen the suffering of the victim and her family.

Chapter 10

Religious Conversion, Parental Rights, and the Protection of a Minor

The Huma Younis Case

Huma Younis, a fourteen-year-old Christian girl from Karachi, was reportedly abducted from her home in October 2019. Her parents immediately contacted the police. Shortly afterward, they received a document through WhatsApp stating that Huma had voluntarily converted to Islam and married her alleged abductor, Abdul Jabbar.

Huma's parents, Younis and Nagina, pursued a legal battle to recover their daughter. They presented government school records and baptism records to prove that Huma was a minor and that the marriage violated the Sindh Child Marriage Act. However, the Sindh High Court rejected these documents and ruled against the Christian family.

According to the manuscript, the court reasoned that because Huma had begun menstruating, she was to be treated as an adult. The lawyers representing the alleged abductor presented documents claiming that she was eighteen years old. The family also reportedly faced threats of blasphemy charges if they continued to pursue the case.

Human rights organizations and the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom later expressed concern that Huma was separated from her family, mistreated, and allegedly held captive.

Legal and Human Rights Significance

The Huma Younis case raises serious questions concerning the relationship between biological maturity, legal age, child protection, and consent. It also demonstrates the need for courts to give proper weight to official records and to protect families from intimidation when they seek legal remedies.

Chapter 11

Forced Marriage, Criminal Investigation, and Judicial Intervention

The Farah Shaheen Case

Farah Shaheen was a twelve-year-old Christian girl whose case resulted in judicial intervention after an eight-month legal struggle. According to the manuscript, she was abducted from her home in Faisalabad on June 25, 2020, by three men.

Farah was allegedly held for five months at the home of Khizr Ahmed Ali, a forty-five-year-old man. During this period, she was tied in a cattle shed, forced into labor, and physically abused. Her father, Asif Masih, struggled to register a First Information Report. The police allegedly ignored his complaints for months and used abusive language.

On December 5, 2020, Farah was rescued by the authorities. She was reportedly found in handcuffs with severe injuries on her ankles. In January 2021, she initially told a judge that she had converted and married of her own free will. Activists argued that she was traumatized and likely speaking under pressure.

On February 16, 2021, after forged documents were exposed, a judge ruled in Farah's favor and reunited her with her family.

Legal and Human Rights Significance

The Farah Shaheen case demonstrates the importance of prompt police action, careful assessment of trauma, and judicial examination of allegedly forged documents. It also shows how delayed investigation can prolong the suffering of a minor victim.

Chapter 12

Minority Rights and Access to Justice

The Priscilla Case

Priscilla, a fifteen-year-old Christian girl from Samandari, Faisalabad, was reportedly abducted from her home in March 2022. According to her father, a Muslim man named Muhammad Qasim broke into their home at night and abducted her. He allegedly threatened to kill the family if they reported the incident.

The manuscript states that Priscilla was forced into marriage and religious conversion. Rights organizations, including Voice for Justice and the Jubilee Campaign, documented the case as part of a wider pattern involving abduction, forced conversion, and forced marriage of Christian and Hindu girls.

Legal and Human Rights Significance

The Priscilla case illustrates the vulnerability of minority families when threats, fear, and lack of immediate protection obstruct access to justice. It also demonstrates the importance of legal aid, witness protection, and effective police response in cases involving minor girls.

Chapter 13

Documentary Evidence, Child Protection, and Police Accountability

The Laiba Sohail Masih Case

Laiba Sohail Masih was a ten-year-old Christian girl who was reportedly abducted and forcibly converted. Her captors produced a false age certificate claiming that she was seventeen years old. However, her NADRA B-form proved that she was only ten.

Despite this official documentation, local police initially failed to act. Laiba was later placed in a women's shelter known as Darul Aman. However, her captors managed to remove her from the facility. She was then reportedly pressured to give false statements claiming that her conversion and marriage were voluntary.

After pressure from the National Commission on the Rights of the Child and human rights organizations, the authorities concluded that the marriage was illegal. Laiba was eventually rescued and returned to her family.

Legal and Human Rights Significance

The Laiba case highlights the critical importance of documentary evidence, especially NADRA records, in determining the age of a minor. It also raises serious questions about shelter security, police accountability, and institutional responsibility for protecting children once they are placed in state custody.

Chapter 14

Criminal Procedure and the Protection of Vulnerable Children

The Amanda Case

Amanda, a Christian girl, reportedly lived for several months with the family of her Muslim captor, Zaid. During this time, she performed household chores and was pressured to convert. When she refused, she was physically abused.

During a visit to Lahore, where her family lived, Amanda managed to escape and return home. That evening, the alleged kidnappers fired bullets at the family's door and demanded her return. At the police station, the kidnappers produced documents claiming that Amanda had converted.

Amanda courageously testified: "I never converted to Islam or married Zaid of my own free will. I am a Christian, and I want to die a faithful Christian." Although she was permitted to remain with her family, the charges against the kidnappers were dropped. Zaid and his family continued to threaten Amanda and her family.

Legal and Human Rights Significance

The Amanda case raises important concerns about coercion, threats, witness protection, and the handling of documentary claims of conversion. Her testimony also illustrates the importance of allowing victims to speak freely and safely before legal authorities.

Chapter 15

Age Verification, Marriage Registration, and Due Process

The Saba Shafiq Case

Saba Shafiq, a twelve-year-old Christian girl, was reportedly abducted from outside her home in Walton Model Colony No. 2, Lahore Cantonment, on January 5. Her abductor, Muhammad Ali, took her to Shaheed Benazirabad in Sindh.

On January 8, a false marriage certificate was prepared stating that Saba was eighteen years old. Her birth certificate, however, showed that she was born on May 16, 2012. According to the manuscript, the police deliberately recorded her age as fifteen or sixteen in the FIR, despite her father insisting on the correct age. When he objected, the police reportedly told him that the false age would "strengthen the case."

Her lawyer, Rana Irfan, filed an application to correct the official record. Muhammad Ali also filed a petition in the Hyderabad Sessions Court seeking legal protection for the alleged marriage, a tactic frequently used to obstruct the recovery of victims.

Legal and Human Rights Significance

The Saba Shafiq case demonstrates the importance of accurate age recording in FIRs, proper verification of birth documents, and careful scrutiny of marriage certificates. It also illustrates how legal petitions may be used strategically to delay or prevent recovery of a minor.

Chapter 16

Religious Freedom, Criminal Investigation, and Judicial Protection

The Elisha Adnan Case

Fourteen-year-old Alishba, also known as Elisha Adnan, was a Christian girl from Vehari district in Punjab. She was reportedly abducted by Babar Mukhtar, a twenty-six-year-old married Muslim man.

Her father immediately reported her missing, but the police refused to register a First Information Report, delaying legal proceedings and increasing the family's distress. When the parents continued to seek information, the police told them that Elisha had converted to Islam and married Mukhtar of her own free will.

When the parents asked to see the documents supporting this claim, the police refused. Mukhtar later produced a fabricated marriage certificate to legitimize the abduction.

Legal and Human Rights Significance

The Elisha Adnan case highlights recurring concerns about police refusal to register FIRs, lack of transparency, fabricated marriage documents, and the vulnerability of minority families seeking legal protection. It also emphasizes the need for independent judicial oversight where police inaction delays justice.

Chapter 17

Other Documented Cases

Recurring Legal Patterns and Institutional Challenges

The cases discussed above are not isolated. The manuscript also records the case of Aden Sabir, who was reportedly kidnapped at gunpoint on July 3, 2025, by Usman Ali after she rejected his marriage proposal.

In August 2025, Ali presented a false marriage certificate in court, claiming that Aden had converted to Islam and married him voluntarily. During the initial hearing, Aden remained silent. Her family reported that she had been threatened with violence against her parents and brother. The judge ruled in Ali's favor and allowed him to leave with her.

In September 2025, Aden's family appealed to the Lahore High Court. After reviewing evidence of coercion and threats, the court ordered Aden returned to her family. She later filed for divorce. In 2026, after Aden became engaged to a Christian man, Usman Ali allegedly retaliated by firing at her family's home on April 20. Since then, Aden and her family have reportedly remained in hiding due to continued threats and fear of further abduction.

Recurring Legal Patterns

Across these documented cases, several recurring patterns emerge:

First, age is frequently disputed, even where families present official records. Second, alleged abductors often produce marriage or conversion documents claiming that the girl is older than her actual age. Third, families frequently report difficulty obtaining prompt police assistance. Fourth, victims may be pressured to state that their conversion or marriage was voluntary. Fifth, legal proceedings often become prolonged, leaving victims and families in uncertainty.

Institutional Challenges

These cases reveal serious institutional challenges involving police response, documentary verification, witness protection, child shelters, court proceedings, and enforcement of child marriage laws. They also demonstrate the urgent need for

stronger mechanisms to protect vulnerable children and to ensure that religious identity does not affect access to justice.

Chapter Conclusion

The documented cases examined in Part III reveal a troubling pattern of vulnerability, delayed protection, disputed documents, and institutional weakness. While every case has its own facts, together they raise urgent questions concerning child protection, legal reform, religious freedom, and the equal application of law. These cases provide the necessary background for the more detailed analysis of the Maria Shahbaz case in the following part of this book.

PART IV

The Maria Shahbaz Case: A Comprehensive Legal, Constitutional, and Human Rights Analysis

Part Introduction

Among the documented cases examined in this book, the Maria Shahbaz case occupies a unique place in Pakistan's contemporary legal and human rights discourse. The case generated extensive judicial proceedings, raised significant constitutional questions, and attracted widespread attention from legal practitioners, human rights organizations, religious communities, and the international community. It has become one of the most widely discussed cases concerning allegations of child marriage, forced religious conversion, age determination, and the protection of minority rights.

Unlike the preceding case studies, which provide representative examples of recurring legal issues, the Maria Shahbaz case is examined in greater depth because of its legal complexity, the extensive documentary record, and the important judicial questions it presents. The case also provides an opportunity to evaluate the practical application of constitutional guarantees, statutory law, and international human rights standards within Pakistan's legal system.

The purpose of this part is neither to advocate for any party nor to challenge the authority of the courts. Rather, it seeks to provide an objective, evidence-based legal analysis of the facts, documentary evidence, judicial proceedings, constitutional issues, and human rights implications arising from the case. The analysis also considers the broader lessons that may contribute to future legal reform, stronger child protection mechanisms, and improved administration of justice.

Chapter 18

The Maria Shahbaz Case

Background and Chronology of Events

This chapter reconstructs the complete factual history of the Maria Shahbaz case in chronological order.

It will examine:

- Family background
- Circumstances preceding the alleged abduction
- Registration of the First Information Report (FIR)
- Reported religious conversion
- Marriage documentation
- Initial legal proceedings
- Subsequent judicial developments
- Appeals and major legal milestones

The purpose of this chapter is to establish an accurate factual foundation before any legal analysis is undertaken.

Chapter 19

Police Investigation, Documentary Evidence, and Judicial Proceedings

This chapter critically examines the investigative and judicial processes associated with the Maria Shahbaz case.

Topics include:

- Police investigation
- Registration of the FIR
- Collection of evidence
- Recovery efforts
- Documentary evidence
- NADRA records
- Birth registration
- School records
- Medical evidence (where applicable)
- Marriage documents
- Conversion certificates (where applicable)
- Statements of witnesses
- Proceedings before the Trial Court
- High Court proceedings
- Proceedings before the Federal Constitutional Court
- Judicial observations
- Final judicial outcome

Special attention will be given to the evidentiary value of official documents and the legal reasoning adopted during the judicial process.

Chapter 20

Constitutional, Legal, and Human Rights Analysis

Having examined the factual record and judicial proceedings, this chapter evaluates the case within the framework of Pakistani constitutional law, statutory legislation, criminal procedure, and international human rights standards.

The chapter will examine:

Constitutional Issues

- Equality before the law
- Freedom of religion
- Protection of minorities
- Protection of children
- Human dignity
- Due process

Statutory Law

- Child Marriage Laws
- Criminal Law
- Family Law
- Law of Evidence
- Relevant Pakistani legislation

International Human Rights Law

- Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR)
- Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)
- Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)
- International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR)

Comparative Legal Perspective

Where appropriate, reference will be made to legal principles applied in comparable common-law jurisdictions.

Chapter 21

Lessons for Law Reform and Child Protection

The concluding chapter draws broader lessons from the Maria Shahbaz case and considers its implications for Pakistan's legal system.

Topics include:

- Legislative reform
- Judicial reform
- Police accountability
- Child protection mechanisms
- Birth registration
- Marriage registration
- Institutional coordination
- Human rights education
- Public policy recommendations
- Protection of religious minorities

Chapter Conclusion

The Maria Shahbaz case extends beyond the circumstances of a single family. It raises important questions concerning the protection of children, the implementation of constitutional guarantees, the administration of justice, and the balance between religious freedom and the rights of vulnerable minors. The lessons drawn from this case provide the foundation for the broader recommendations presented in the final part of this book.

PART V

Towards Justice: Reform, Protection, and the Future

Part Introduction

The preceding chapters have examined the historical background of forced marriage and religious conversion, the constitutional and legal framework governing the protection of religious minorities, the responsibilities of public institutions, documented case studies, and the comprehensive analysis of the Maria Shahbaz case. Together, these discussions reveal not only the legal complexities surrounding allegations of forced conversion and child marriage but also the institutional challenges that continue to affect the protection of vulnerable children.

The purpose of this concluding part is to move beyond the analysis of individual cases and consider broader legal, institutional, and policy reforms. Effective protection requires more than legislative change alone. It also depends upon impartial law enforcement, an independent judiciary, accurate civil registration systems, professional legal practice, informed public policy, and a shared commitment to protecting the dignity and rights of every child.

The recommendations presented in this part are offered as constructive proposals for strengthening the rule of law, improving child protection, promoting religious freedom, and enhancing public confidence in the administration of justice. They are intended to encourage informed dialogue among legislators, judges, lawyers, policymakers, human rights organizations, religious leaders, and civil society.

Chapter 22 — Legislative Reform

Instead of merely listing reforms, we should explain the purpose and expected outcomes.

Uniform Protection of Children

The law should provide equal protection to every child regardless of religion, ethnicity, gender, or social background. A child should never lose legal protection because of conflicting interpretations of age or personal status.

Benefit to society

- Greater public confidence in the justice system.
- Reduction in child exploitation.
- Stronger rule of law.
- Better compliance with constitutional guarantees.

Benefit to religious minorities

- Greater confidence that minority children receive equal legal protection.
- Reduced fear of discrimination.
- Stronger protection for family integrity.

Reliable Birth Registration

Without reliable birth registration, disputes concerning age become difficult to resolve.

Benefit

- Protects all Pakistani children.
- Reduces forged documentation.
- Assists courts in determining legal age.
- Improves educational and health planning.

Uniform Marriage Registration

Every marriage should be properly documented and verifiable.

Benefit

- Reduces fraudulent marriages.
- Protects women.
- Protects inheritance rights.
- Assists judicial review.

Chapter 23 — Judicial Reform

This chapter can explain why judicial reform benefits everyone.

Specialized Child Protection Courts

Judges trained in children's rights can better evaluate:

- trauma,
- consent,
- age determination,
- psychological evidence.

Benefit to society

Faster decisions.

Greater consistency.

Reduced litigation.

Uniform Standards for Age Determination

Instead of different standards, courts should rely upon objective documentary evidence whenever available.

Benefit

Predictable judicial decisions.

Reduced legal uncertainty.

Greater public confidence.

Continuing Judicial Education

Human rights law continues to evolve.

Judges should receive continuing education regarding:

- child psychology,
- international conventions,
- constitutional interpretation,

- documentary evidence.

Chapter 24 — Police Reform

Rather than criticizing police generally, we propose professional reforms.

Examples:

- Specialized Child Protection Units.
- Mandatory registration of FIRs.
- Digital evidence systems.
- Body cameras where appropriate.
- Training on minority rights.
- Protection of witnesses.
- Coordination with prosecutors.

Benefits:

- Better investigations.
- Fewer wrongful accusations.
- Stronger public trust.

Chapter 25 — Institutional Cooperation

This chapter can become one of the strongest in the book.

Instead of government acting alone, explain cooperation among:

- Judiciary
- Police
- NADRA
- Child Protection Bureau
- Human Rights Commission
- Churches
- Muslim religious scholars
- Universities
- Media
- Civil society

Explain how each institution contributes.

Chapter 26 — Policy Recommendations

Instead of simple recommendations, present a **National Action Framework**.

For Parliament:

- Review legislation.
- Remove inconsistencies.
- Strengthen minority protections.

For Police:

- Improve investigations.
- Protect victims.

For Courts:

- Child-sensitive hearings.
- Faster trials.

For Schools:

- Human rights education.
- Religious tolerance.

For Religious Leaders:

- Condemn forced conversions and coercion.
- Promote peaceful coexistence.
- Encourage respect for the law and the dignity of every person.

For Civil Society:

- Legal aid.
- Victim support.
- Public awareness.

For Media:

- Responsible reporting.
- Protection of children's identities.
- Fact-based journalism.

Chapter 27

Conclusion

Justice, Human Dignity, and the Rule of Law

The protection of children and the safeguarding of religious freedom are among the defining responsibilities of every constitutional democracy. Throughout this book, the historical background, legal framework, institutional responsibilities, and documented case studies have demonstrated the complexity of allegations involving forced conversion and child marriage affecting members of Pakistan's religious minority communities.

While individual cases differ in their facts and judicial outcomes, they collectively highlight the importance of accurate age determination, reliable documentary evidence, impartial investigations, independent judicial review, and effective child protection. They also demonstrate that constitutional guarantees and international human rights standards are most meaningful when they are consistently implemented through fair and transparent legal processes.

This study has sought to examine these issues through the lens of law rather than emotion, evidence rather than speculation, and constructive reform rather than confrontation. The objective has not been to assign collective blame but to encourage thoughtful discussion regarding the protection of vulnerable children, the administration of justice, and the equal dignity of every citizen.

The future of any society depends upon its willingness to protect those who are least able to protect themselves. Strengthening the rule of law, promoting institutional accountability, and safeguarding the rights of all citizens—regardless of religion, gender, or social status—remain essential foundations of justice, national unity, and democratic governance.

It is the hope of the author that this revised and expanded edition will contribute to informed legal scholarship, responsible public policy, meaningful human rights dialogue, and continued efforts to ensure that every child grows up free from coercion, protected by law, and treated with the dignity inherent in every human being.

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- Maria Shahbaz

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Appendix

Legal Analysis Shahbaz Masih Vs Additional Session Judge, Lahore. P.C.P.L.A 536 of 2025

From a legal analysis perspective, there are several possible internal tensions, logical inconsistencies, and evidentiary weaknesses in this judgment — especially regarding:

1. Maria's age
2. Her legal capacity as a minor
3. Conversion to Islam
4. The Court's simultaneous reliance on "People of the Book" doctrine
5. Consent and admissibility of a minor's statement

Below is a structured legal critique based on the judgment itself.

1. Core Internal Contradiction:

Was Maria Christian or Muslim at the time of marriage?

The Court makes two different arguments simultaneously:

Argument A:

A Muslim male may marry a Christian woman under Islamic law (Ahl al-Kitab doctrine).

BUT THEN —

Argument B:

Maria had already converted to Islam before marriage, therefore the marriage was between two Muslims.

These two legal foundations do not comfortably coexist.

Because:

- If Maria converted to Islam before marriage,

then the marriage is NOT an interfaith marriage.

- Therefore, invoking Qur'anic permission for marrying Christians becomes legally irrelevant.

This creates a doctrinal inconsistency in the judgment.

The Court appears to use:

- Islamic law permitting Muslim-Christian marriage,

AND

- Islamic conversion principles,

at the same time,

without choosing one consistent legal framework.

That is a significant analytical flaw.

2. Minor's Conversion Problem

The most serious legal weakness may be this:

The Court treats Maria's declaration of conversion as legally valid even though her age was heavily disputed and she may have been 12 years old.

Yet the same judgment repeatedly discusses her alleged minority status.

This creates a major constitutional and evidentiary issue:

Question:

Can a minor legally and independently renounce her religion?

The judgment does not deeply analyze:

- capacity,
- maturity,
- coercion vulnerability,
- informed consent,
- psychological influence,

- or guardianship implications.

Instead, the Court largely accepts:

- an affidavit,
- a later certificate from Dar-ul-Afta,
- and her statements,

as sufficient proof of conversion.

Critics could argue:

A minor's religious conversion requires stricter scrutiny than the Court applied for.

3. Use of Section 164 Statement

The Court repeatedly relies on Maria's statement under Section 164 Cr.P.C. as proof of:

- free will,
- consent,
- and validation of marriage.

However:

If Maria was truly a minor,
then her legal capacity to:

- marry,
- convert religion,
- leave guardianship,
- and make binding declarations,

becomes highly contestable.

This is especially important because minors are generally considered legally vulnerable people.

The Court never fully resolves this tension.

Instead, it says:

- child marriage may be punishable,
- but not void under existing law.

But that addresses marriage validity —

not necessarily validity of religious conversion by a child.

That distinction is largely missing.

4. The Court Downplays Documentary Age Evidence

The petitioner produced:

- birth certificate,
- child registration certificate,

showing birth date 07.10.2012.

The Court weakened these documents because:

- they were issued years later,
- and there was inconsistency with sibling birth dates.

But critics may argue:

Pakistan's NADRA and delayed birth registration systems are common realities, especially among poor or minority families.

Delayed registration alone does not automatically invalidate official records.

The Court arguably shifted from:

“Documents are imperfect”

to

“Documents are unreliable,”

without ordering:

- forensic verification,

- medical board examination,
- school records inquiry,
- or independent age determination.

That can be criticized as insufficient evidentiary scrutiny.

5. Physical Appearance Reasoning

The Court states Maria:

“Appears to be of a more advanced age.”

This is a highly controversial observation.

Physical appearance is not normally considered reliable proof of age, especially in:

- child marriage,
- trafficking,
- abduction,
- or conversion cases.

Critics could argue this introduces subjective judicial impression instead of objective evidence.

6. Reliance on Old Precedents

The Court heavily relies on:

- PLD 1962,
- PLD 1970,
- 1970 SCMR,

etc.

Most of these precedents:

- arose before modern child rights jurisprudence,
- before international child protection conventions,

- before expanded constitutional rights discourse,
- before modern trafficking concerns.

Critics may argue the Court insufficiently engaged with:

- CRC (Convention on the Rights of the Child),
- CEDAW,
- modern human rights principles,
- evolving constitutional morality.

7. The Court Avoids Coercion Analysis

The judgment largely assumes:

because Maria repeatedly said “I went voluntarily,” therefore coercion was absent.

But modern jurisprudence often recognizes:

- grooming,
- dependency,
- emotional pressure,
- religious pressure,
- economic vulnerability,
- and fear,

as subtler forms of coercion.

The Court did not substantially examine those dimensions.

8. Res Judicata Application May Be Weak

The Court says earlier dismissal became final and therefore operates as res judicata.

But one may argue:

new facts later emerged:

- disputed Nikahnama,

- conversion issue,
- minority issue,
- later evidence.

Thus, strict application of res judicata in a habeas-type liberty matter involving a possible child may itself be contestable.

9. Broader Constitutional Tension

The judgment strongly protects:

- adult autonomy,
- religious declaration,
- marital choice.

But it insufficiently balances:

- child protection,
- minority vulnerability,
- parental guardianship rights regarding minors,
- and anti-trafficking concerns.

This imbalance is one reason such judgments become controversial.

Your Main Insight Is Legally Significant

Your observation is one of the strongest internal critiques of the judgment:

If the Court accepts Maria converted to Islam before marriage, then the Court cannot simultaneously justify the marriage under the Islamic doctrine allowing Muslim men to marry Christian women.

Exactly.

Because once converted:

- she is no longer legally “Ahl al-Kitab” in the Court’s own reasoning.
- therefore, the interfaith doctrine becomes unnecessary and logically irrelevant.

A stricter judgment would have chosen one framework:

Either:

1. She remained Christian → interfaith marriage doctrine applies

OR

2. She converted before marriage → Islamic inter-Muslim marriage doctrine applies

But using both together creates analytical overlaps and doctrinal inconsistency.

About the Author

Dr. Emanuel Adil Ghouri is a Pakistani Christian human rights advocate, journalist, social activist, and researcher whose work has been devoted to the protection of religious minorities, the promotion of justice, and the defense of fundamental human rights in Pakistan. He serves as the **Chairman of Masihi Tehreek-e-Baradari**, a Christian social and advocacy movement that works to raise awareness of the challenges faced by minority communities and to promote equality, constitutional rights, and the rule of law.

Born and raised in **Sialkot, Pakistan**, Dr. Ghouri comes from one of the most historically significant cities in the history of Christianity in South Asia. Sialkot, known in ancient times as **Sagala**, has long been recognized as one of the earliest centers from which Christianity spread into the Indian subcontinent through missionary activity, educational institutions, and the witness of the early Church. This rich historical and spiritual heritage has profoundly influenced Dr. Ghouri's commitment to preserving the history, identity, and rights of Pakistan's Christian community.

Throughout his public life, Dr. Ghouri has actively documented issues affecting religious minorities, particularly cases involving alleged forced conversion, child marriage, discrimination, and violations of fundamental human rights. As a journalist and human rights campaigner, he has written extensively on legal and social issues, bringing national and international attention to the experiences of vulnerable communities. His work seeks to encourage constructive dialogue, strengthen democratic institutions, and promote peaceful coexistence among people of different faiths.

Dr. Ghouri's research combines legal analysis, constitutional principles, historical documentation, and human rights advocacy. His writings are distinguished by a commitment to evidence-based research and careful documentation, seeking not merely to describe social problems but also to encourage meaningful legal reform and institutional accountability. He believes that justice, equality before the law, and respect for human dignity are essential foundations of every democratic society.

This book reflects years of research into documented cases, constitutional law, judicial developments, international human rights standards, and the lived experiences of religious minority families in Pakistan. Through this work, Dr. Ghouri seeks to

contribute to informed public discussion and to encourage stronger legal protection for children, greater respect for religious freedom, and equal access to justice for every citizen.

His continuing mission remains the promotion of justice, the protection of vulnerable communities, and the advancement of human dignity through research, advocacy, responsible journalism, and constructive engagement with legal and public institutions.

BETWEEN FAITH AND COERCION

FORCED CONVERSION, CHILD MARRIAGE,
AND THE PERSECUTION OF CHRISTIAN GIRLS
IN PAKISTAN

This book is a comprehensive legal, constitutional, and human rights study of the systemic challenges faced by Christian girls in Pakistan, including forced religious conversion, child marriage, and institutional failures. It examines the historical background, legal framework, landmark cases, and the tragic realities documented through extensive research. The book highlights the Maria Shahbaz case in depth and offers practical recommendations for law reform, judicial accountability, and the protection of vulnerable minorities.



Legal and Constitutional Analysis



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“ *Speak up for those
who cannot speak for themselves,
for the rights of all
who are destitute.* ”

— PROVERBS 31:8



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