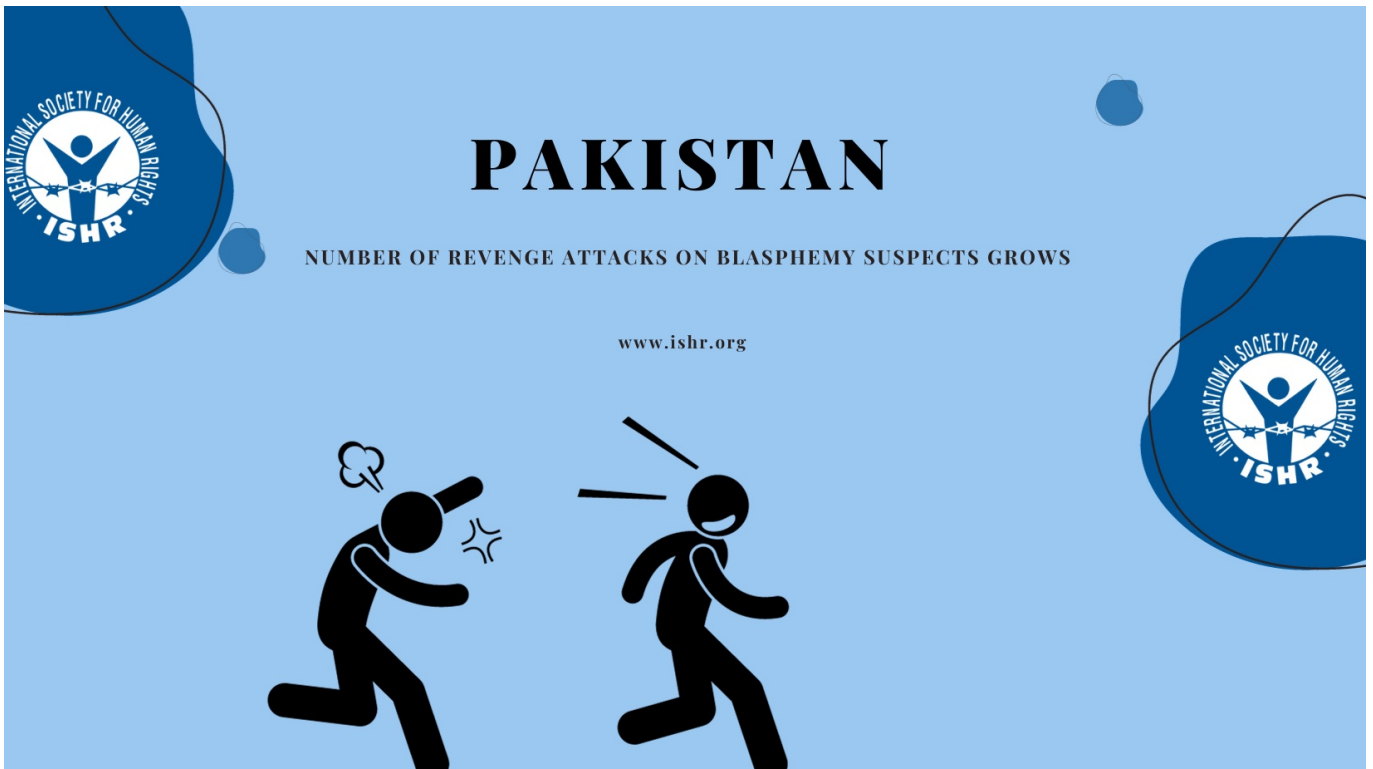


PAKISTAN



NUMBER OF REVENGE ATTACKS ON BLASPHEMY SUSPECTS GROWS

Under the false pretext of having to defend themselves against insults to Islam, members of

religious minorities as well as dissenters in Pakistan are currently being attacked more frequently and violently by mobs. Several reports of false accusations of blasphemy have reached IGFM through its local partners in recent weeks.

In the town of Jaranwala (Punjab Province), pogrom-like riots broke out on 16 August against a settlement inhabited mainly by Christians as a result of blasphemy accusations. In a nearby Muslim residential area, leaflets had been deposited by unknown persons showing torn out pages of the Koran and signed with Christian names.

The reaction to this obvious provocation was swift and cruel: in the streets and mosques, angry fanatics called for violence against the minority. According to witnesses, a warning reached the Christian community in time. They notified the security forces and saved themselves by fleeing into surrounding fields. A small task force of the local police reached the scene late. The mob was able to rage there for five hours before soldiers arrived for reinforcement. Demolitions and looting destroyed 20 churches and numerous homes. Meanwhile, investigations are underway for terrorism and vandalism. However, two Christians are also said to have been arrested under suspicion because of the leaflet action.

Apparently, violent Muslim fanatics in Pakistan are just waiting for an excuse: 22-year-old Muslim Abdul Rauf was shot dead in the street by masked perpetrators in Turbat (Balochistan province) on 5 August 2023 after students accused him of blasphemy. Rauf was a student, but also worked as an English teacher at a language school. He denied the accusations and was on his way to a madrassa to defend himself.