



Open Access

*Al-Naza'ir Journal of Modern Religious Discourses (NJMRD)*Vol: 01, Issue: 01, 2025, pp: 18-26 <https://journal.vu.edu.pk/NJMRD>

Violation of the Rights of Religious Minorities: An Analytical Study of Majority Religious Groups, Media, and State Strategies

1. Prof. Dr. Zia ur Rehman (Correspondence Author)

Chairman, Department of Qur'anic Studies, The Islamia University of Bahawalpur.

zia.rehman@iub.edu.pk, <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4580-7970>

2. Dr. Muhammad Tahir Akbar

Lecturer, University of Central Punjab, Bahawalpur Campus.

786tiens@gmail.com, <https://orcid.org/0009-0008-2290-594X>

Abstract

This article deals with a sensitive topic that has always been of great importance. Even in the present era, the violation of the rights of religious minorities poses serious threats to human rights and social harmony in different parts of the world. It examines the complex relationship between religion, nationalism, the role of the state, controlled media, and yellow journalism. Its main objective is to understand the historical and contemporary factors that form the basis of growing religious nationalism, extremism, and oppression against minorities. An attempt has been made to understand, in a historical context, how nationalism, religious identity, controlled media, and yellow journalism have been used for political purposes in different periods, as well as how political actors, religious leaders, and state institutions reinforce this narrative. The main focus of the research is on the role of traditional and digital media. In today's information-rich world where there is a flood of information, there is a need to understand the control of the media by dictators or powerful groups, blackout of factual news, censorship, suppression of information, underreporting, gatekeeping and false propaganda, as well as the methods of yellow journalism, misinformation, corruption and methods of spreading disinformation to the public through negative speeches. The perception of minority groups has been negatively changed, minorities are marginalized and violence against them is also justified. Thus, the fundamental human rights of minorities are suspended. They are seen as being unable to provide justice by the courts and government institutions, which is a great tragedy. The research methodology of the article consists of historical analysis and content analysis, which will deeply study the growing trends of nationalism, religious extremism, and Islam phobia.

Keywords: Violation, Minority, Media Tactics, Religious, Extremism, Human rights,

Introduction

The violation of the rights of religious minorities is a serious and global challenge to human rights and social cohesion in the present era. This research is conducted to examine the roots of this sensitive issue and its destructive effects. Historically, nationalism, religious identity and controlled media have been used for political purposes to shape a narrative that targets minority groups.

This paper examines in depth the interplay between state violence; such as the misuse of discriminatory laws and non-state violence; the actions of extremist groups. In particular, the

role of the media through bad tactics is discussed. Why do rights violate, despite international laws and constitutional guarantees? This paper seeks to answer this fundamental question, arguing that the protection of minority rights is not only a legal requirement but also a fundamental requirement of the moral teachings of all religions.

Key Questions and Methodology of the Research:

RQ1: What are the underlying drivers of the violation of the rights of religious minorities?

RQ2: What is the nexus between state and non-state actors in promoting narratives of violence?

RQ3: How do controlled media and yellow journalism promote intolerance against religious minorities?

RQ4: Why do rights violations continue despite international laws and democratic constitutional guarantees?

RQ5: How can the universal teachings of all religions play a role in protecting minority rights?

Given the depth and breadth of the subject matter of this research article, its methodology is primarily qualitative in nature, which consists of the following elements:

1. Historical and Analytical Method:

It provides an in-depth analysis of nationalism and religious extremism trends in different periods with a historical background to explore the roots of the use of religious identity for political purposes.

2. Content Analysis of Int. Reports and Legal Documents:

A comparative review of relevant articles (such as Articles 20, 25, 18, 27) of the 1973 Constitution of Pakistan, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), and the United Nations International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), in addition to an analysis of international reports such as Human Rights Watch, Pew Research Center, and the US Department of State's reports and data to understand the nature of global rankings and violations of religious freedom.

International situation of religious minority rights:

According to reports, Rohing'yā Muslims in Myanmar, Uyghur Muslims in China, and Tibetan Buddhists face systematic state repression and imprisonment. Baha'is, Christians, and Sunni Muslims are denied religious freedom in Iran, while Christians and followers of other religions face extreme imprisonment and torture in North Korea. Similarly, Shia Muslims in Saudi Arabia face discrimination. Minorities also face persecution in Pakistan and India. Government policies in Russia, Cuba, Eritrea, Nicaragua, Tajikistan, and Turkmenistan severely restrict or outright persecute minorities and some other Muslim sects.¹ In Europe and elsewhere in the world, Muslims face discrimination in basic areas such as education, employment, and housing due to Islam phobia. Even in developed countries such as France, Germany, the United Kingdom, and the United States, they are subjected to hate speech and attacks for expressing their religious identity such as wearing a hijab or beard, which pushes them towards social exclusion in society and limits their freedoms.

The protection of the rights of religious minority groups is a fundamental pillar of international human rights law, which is the basis of the UN Charter and fundamental human rights treaties. In 1992, the UN General Assembly adopted the "Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities", which imposes on states the obligation to protect the religious, cultural and linguistic identity of

their respective minorities.² Despite this declaration; according to international reports, religious minorities still face not only discrimination but are also the target of systematic repression and attacks.

Non-governmental organizations such as Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch regularly present evidence that clearly demonstrates the violation of freedom of religion or belief against religious minorities. These abuses include forced conversions, attacks on places of worship, and the enforcement of discriminatory laws at the legislative and administrative levels. According to Amnesty International, 2023 reports; State institutions often ignore or justify violence against minorities in support of the narrative of the religious majority.³

Violence against minority groups can be divided into two main types: State Violence and Non-State Violence. According to Human Rights Watch, 2024, State violence includes actions where the state itself or its institutions (such as the police, judiciary) violate minority rights through discriminatory laws, discriminatory policies, or ineffective law enforcement. They also use media tactics. Examples of this include the misuse of blasphemy laws in some countries, which serve as a means of harassing and imprisoning minority individuals.⁴

On the other hand, non-state violence includes incidents such as attacks, property damage, and killing's minorities by violent elements of majority religious groups or extremist organizations. These non-state actors often justify their actions by promoting religious nationalism. The silence or support of the state narrative further strengthens the ambitions of these groups, resulting in a serious failure to provide justice to minority groups. These incidents suspend the fundamental human rights of religious minorities, such as the right to life, liberty and security, and the right to equal justice, which is a great tragedy and a serious challenge for the international community.

According to Pew Research Center reports, countries with the fewest government restrictions on religious freedom generally have strong democratic institutions and secular constitutional frameworks. According to Pew's latest comprehensive report 2021, the countries considered the best defenders of religious freedom in the global ranking are generally those in strong democracies in Western Europe, Australia, and North America, where religious freedom is constitutionally guaranteed. These countries include the Netherlands, Australia, Canada, Belgium, Japan, Brazil, Argentina, Ireland, Finland, New Zealand, and Switzerland, where religious freedom is constitutionally protected and practiced.⁵ According to US Foreign Ministry report; Pakistan is among the 12 countries with serious violations of religious freedom. Other countries include Burma/Myanmar, China, Cuba, Eritrea, Iran, Nicaragua, North Korea, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistān.

The root causes of religious rights violations against minorities in these 12 countries are deeply rooted in government policies and state repression. In China, North Korea, Iran, and Russia, state institutions maintain tight control over religious activities and suppress any non-state or alternative faith, viewing it as a source of political instability. In countries such as Pakistan and Saudi Arabia, there is a climate of violence and social discrimination against minority communities. Furthermore, in countries such as Myanmar, Tajikistan, and Turkmenistan, only a specific religious group is protected as the state religion, and followers of all other religions are denied all benefits, including registration and freedom of worship. In Cuba and Nicaragua, communist or authoritarian governments target religious institutions as elements opposing the state. Overall, the root cause of these violations is the use of religion as a tool by governments to consolidate their power and maintain social control.⁶

Violation of minority rights: Three basic factors

Media, state narrative, and religious nationalism play a fundamental role in the violation of minority rights in any society. The interplay of these three elements not only promotes prejudice against minority groups but also paves the way for the normalization and denial of their fundamental freedoms.

State narrative and bias

According to various studies; governments often use a specific state narrative to promote a uniform national identity, usually based on the religion or ethnicity of the majority. This narrative portrays minority groups as either 'the other' or 'suspect'. As a result, state policies, such as citizenship laws or restrictions on religious freedom, treat minority individuals as second-class citizens. This narrative also provides state institutions with an implicit justification for taking action against minorities.⁷

The Role of Religious Nationalism

Religious nationalism further reinforces this state narrative. This ideology views religion as an integral part of national identity, which questions the patriotism of adherents of minority religions or sects. The result is that religious fanatic groups wage hate campaigns against minorities, often involving forced conversions, attacks on religious places of worship, and accusations of blasphemy. This religious extremism also enjoys silent support at the government level, with law enforcement agencies ignoring minority grievances.⁸

Using the media as a weapon:

Mainstream media and especially social media, popularizes negative stereotypes and hateful content against minority groups in the name of sensationalism. The media does not give importance to the humanitarian crises of minority individuals and either hides or distorts the incidents against them. This continuous negative coverage creates fear and suspicion in the minds of the majority, which gives social acceptance to the atrocities committed against minorities. This process isolates minority groups from society and makes it difficult to raise their voice for their rights.⁹

Definitions of Media Terms:

Here are the terms that play a significant role in the violation of minority rights through the media.

1. The screening of information by a government or powerful group and the suppression of some of it from the public is called censorship.
2. The decision of media editors, owners or the government to publish which news items will be published and which will not; is called gatekeeping. It is a way of filtering information according to the agenda of powerful groups.
3. The complete cessation of coverage of an important news item or event is called a blackout. It is a powerful tool to prevent violence against minorities or human rights violations from coming to the public, which reduces the likelihood of them getting justice.
4. Underreporting is the under-covering of an issue according to its importance or severity. It makes the problems of minorities appear less important and provides a justification for government agencies not to pay attention to these problems.
5. The systematic dissemination of misleading or false information, in order to change public opinion for a specific purpose is called false propaganda.
6. Journalism based sensationalism, exaggeration, blackmail or unverified news is called yellow journalism. This method also changes the perception of minority groups negatively by presenting misinformation in a dramatic way.
7. Statements or speeches that promote hatred, hostility or prejudice against a group are called negative speeches. The spread of such speeches on media and social media also incites practical violence against minorities and provides social justification for suspending their fundamental rights.

Suspension of rights and failure of justice

When the media and state narratives use all of the tactics described above, minority groups are given a rejected status in the country and society. As a result: An environment is created where it becomes easy to target minorities and difficult to defend them. Protecting their rights is only possible when the media understands its responsibility and states incorporate inclusiveness into their narratives.

Violation of the rights of religious minorities:

An overview of international laws and constitutional provisions; There are several basic laws at the international level to protect religious minorities:

1. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (United Nations General Assembly, 1948): Article 18; grants everyone the right to "freedom of thought, conscience and religion." This includes freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion, worship and observance.¹⁰
2. The United Nations International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights of 1966 further elaborates on the right to freedom of religion enshrined in the UDHR. Its Article 18 guarantees freedom of religion, while Article 26 ensures equality before the law and the prohibition of discrimination. Most importantly, Article 27 guarantees the right of persons belonging to religious minorities, especially in countries where they exist, to manifest their religion and to practice it in accordance with their religious beliefs.¹¹
3. The constitution of every democratic country guarantees religious freedom, equality, and non-discrimination for its citizens. For example, Article 20 of the 1973 Constitution of Pakistan grants citizens the right to freedom of religion and the management of religious institutions, and Article 25 declares all citizens equal before the law.¹²

When the rights of religious minorities are suspended or violated in a country, it has serious implications both domestically and internationally:

The violation of rights fuels religious hatred, which often leads to violence, migration, and religious tensions. It destroys the social fabric of the country and weakens national unity.¹³

The suspension of rights severely damages a country's reputation in the international community. Such violations are condemned by United Nations agencies, other international organizations, and human rights organizations, which can result in international economic sanctions or deterioration in diplomatic relations.¹⁴

Protecting the rights of religious minorities is not only a moral obligation but also a legal and practical necessity for any developing and stable state. The suspension of these rights is a fundamental departure from international law and constitutional principles, with far-reaching and devastating consequences.

The Instructions of Religious Harmony in Religions:Top of FormTop of Form

Almost all religions teach love for human beings and emphasize respecting their rights and giving them the right to life and religious freedom; which can be used to improve relations between people. Below are some examples.

a) Teachings in Holy Qur'ān:

Respect for humanity is mentioned in many places in the Quran.

”يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ إِنَّا خَلَقْنَاهُ مِنْ ذَكَرٍ وَأُنْثَىٰ وَجَعَلْنَاهُ شُعُوبًا وَقَبَائِلَ لِتَعَارَفُوا إِنَّ أَكْرَمَكُمْ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ أَتْقَاهُ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلِيمٌ خَبِيرٌ“¹⁵

"O mankind, indeed we have created you from male and female and made your tribes that you may know one another. Indeed, the most noble of you in the sight of Allah is the most righteous of you. Indeed, Allah is Knowing and Acquainted."

b) Respect for other Faiths:

”لَا إِكْرَاهَ فِي الدِّينِ، قَدْ تَبَيَّنَ الرُّشْدُ مِنَ الْغَيِّ فَمَنْ يَكْفُرْ بِالطَّاغُوتِ وَ يُوْمِنُ بِاللّٰهِ فَقَدِ اسْتَمْسَكَ بِالْعُرْوَةِ الْوُثْقَىٰ- لَا انْفِصَامَ لَهَا- وَاللّٰهُ سَمِيعٌ عَلِيمٌ“¹⁶

"There is no compulsion in religion. The right direction is henceforth distinct from error and he, who rejected false deities and believeth in Allah hath grasped a firm handhold which will never break."

c) Teachings in Bible for Religious Harmony:

In Bible, there are many instructions about tolerance, coherence, peace and harmony.

1. "Pay attention to the words of the wise; apply your heart to my teaching. For it is good to keep these teachings in your heart and always ready on your sayings."¹⁷
2. "The Bible advises that one should make every effort to maintain peace in society and live with peace."¹⁸
3. "It was written about the Holy Spirit that He makes our lives easier and teaches us love, joy, peace, goodness, truth, and gentleness."¹⁹
4. "The Bible advises everyone to live in harmony and says to be in harmony with each other in the church, not to disagree, and to be united."²⁰

d) Instructions in Hinduism.

The teachings of Hinduism also highlight the values of understanding, harmony with other religions, respect for humanity, and unity.

1. "Let people of different beliefs come together and share in the common bond of kindness."²¹
2. "May diverse paths lead us to the common goal of peace and coexistence"²²
3. "The wise recognize the underlying unity in all religions, fostering harmony."²³
4. "The teachings of Hinduism have declared harmony essential and said that in unity there is strength and improvement in society."²⁴
5. "Communication is a bridge between different beliefs, promoting understanding and tolerance."²⁵
6. "May the media be a instrument for increasing wisdom and understanding, fostering interfaith harmony"²⁶

Conclusion:

This article presents a deep and comprehensive analysis of a very serious and ever-important topic, the ongoing violation of the rights of religious minorities and the grave threats it poses to human rights and social cohesion. The main objective of the research is to understand the drivers, especially nationalism, religious identity and the use of controlled media, which have been used to create a narrative for political purposes in different periods. And at the same time, to clarify how all major religions are defenders of minority rights.

The research methodology includes historical analysis and in-depth material analysis, examining the growing trends of nationalism, religious extremism and Islam phobia. The paper identifies the forces that reinforce this narrative, including political actors, religious leaders and state institutions. The interplay of these elements not only promotes prejudice against minority groups but also paves the way for the denial of their fundamental freedoms.

The article divides violence against minority groups into two clear categories:

1. State violence: According to the definition of Human Rights Watch (2024), it is when the state or its institutions (police, judiciary) themselves violate minority rights through discriminatory laws, discriminatory policies, or ineffective enforcement of the law. Examples of this include the misuse of blasphemy laws in some countries, which is a systematic means of harassing minority individuals. The state also uses media tactics for this.
2. Non-state violence: This includes incidents such as attacks, property damage, and killings by violent elements of majority religious groups or extremist organizations. These non-state actors

justify their actions by promoting religious nationalism. The silence or support of the state narrative further strengthens the ambitions of these groups, resulting in a serious failure to provide justice to minority groups. These events suspend the fundamental human rights of religious minorities, namely the right to life, security and equal justice, which is a serious global tragedy.

The media, state narrative and religious nationalism play a fundamental role in the violation of minority rights. These three elements are interconnected and create an environment where prejudice and discrimination are normalized. The media uses the following tactics to violate minority rights: Censorship, Gatekeeping, Blackout, Underreporting, False propaganda, Yellow journalism, Blackout of factual news, Promoting negative discourse through misinformation and corruption.

When the media and state narrative use all these tactics, minority groups are given a rejected status in the country and society. As a result, minorities become easier to target and harder to defend.

According to reports by the Pew Research Center (2021), countries with the best record of religious freedom have strong democratic institutions and constitutional guarantees. In contrast, the US State Department has identified 12 countries, including Pakistan, where serious violations of religious freedom occur, rooted in government repression and the use of religion as a tool to consolidate power.

The research also includes an overview of international laws protecting religious minorities: Like Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948): Article 18; which provides for the right to freedom of thought, conscience, and religion.

United Nations International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1966): Article 27 specifically guarantees the right of minority groups to practice their religion.

Constitutions of democratic countries, such as the Constitution of Pakistan, guarantee religious freedom and equality through Articles 20 and 25.

The suspension of the rights of religious minorities has far-reaching and devastating consequences, which undermine national unity and can lead to international sanctions. It is a moral, legal and practical imperative that these rights be protected. Their rights can only be protected when the media understands its responsibility and states include inclusiveness in their narratives. The teachings of all religions can be used to improve relations between people.

Results:

The following are the final and scholarly conclusions drawn from this research study, which shed light on the complex factors, state role and negative media effects of religious minority rights violations:

1. **The State-Non-State Nexus of Violence:** This research clearly demonstrates that violence against religious minorities can be divided into two main and interrelated types, which collectively result in the complete suspension of minority rights: There is a systematic framework of state violence through the misuse of discriminatory laws such as blasphemy, and discriminatory policies or ineffective enforcement of the law by state institutions. Non-state actors are often empowered by the silence or indirect support of state narratives, which allows them to justify violent incidents such as attacks and property damage under the guise of religious nationalism. This nexus leads to a failure to provide justice to minority groups.
2. **Destructive media strategies:** Hate against minority groups is promoted through techniques; such as media censorship, false propaganda, yellow journalism, misinformation, and blackout of factual news. This combined strategy gives minority

groups a rejected status in the country and society, creating an environment where they become easy targets and their basic freedoms are denied.

3. **Power Consolidation and Lack of Religious Freedom:** Analysis of reports by the Pew Research Center and the US Department of State suggest that the lack of religious freedom is actually a product of governments' strategies to consolidate their power and maintain social control. In countries, where religious freedom is severely violated, government policies use religion as a political tool, while countries with strong democratic institutions and secular constitutional structures are the best protectors of religious freedom.
4. **Ethical Imperative and Constitutional Deviation:** This research concludes that the violation of the rights of religious minorities is not only a moral tragedy but also a fundamental deviation from international law and constitutional principles.
5. **Violation of religious teachings:** The basic message of all major religions emphasizes love, respect, and the right to life for human beings. Violation of minority rights actually negates these universal religious and moral principles.

Future Recommendations:

The following concrete and academic recommendations are made to prevent the violation of the rights of religious minorities and ensure global justice:

1. **Review of discriminatory laws:**

Relevant constitutional institutions should conduct an impartial and comprehensive review of laws such as blasphemy to prevent their misuse and bring them into line with international human rights standards. Clear, non-discriminatory and prompt mechanisms should be put in place to fill the gaps in the implementation of ineffective laws.

2. **Inclusiveness in policies:**

State institutions should change their narratives and position minority groups as an integral part of national development and social fabric. The tendency to use religious nationalism for political purposes should be eliminated through strict policies.

3. **Tackling destructive media:**

Enable an independent regulatory framework to prevent the media from engaging in false propaganda, yellow journalism, misinformation and blackout of factual news. Ensure that the media promotes transparency and a multi-faceted perspective rather than censorship.

4. **Promotion of religious teachings:**

The teachings of all religions, which are based on love, respect and equality, should be widely promoted in the curriculum and on public platforms as a counter-narrative to counter religious extremism.

5. **Advocacy for expansion of ICC membership:**

Universities, research institutions, civil society, columnists and journalists should continuously push for the expansion of the current membership of the International Criminal Court (ICC) of 126 states to 193 members, equivalent to the International Court of Justice (ICJ). The aim of this expansion is to bring state and non-state crimes against religious minorities under the purview of global accountability and to broaden the scope of the Rome Statute.

6. **Civil Society Monitoring:**

Civil society organizations at the local level should be empowered to monitor violations of minority rights and play a bridge role in conveying reports to relevant global forums.

References:

- ¹. *Annual Report 2023*, US Commission on International Religious Freedom, Report Retrieved from the official USCIRF website, 14/11/2025 <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2024/01/22/2024-01084/secretary-of-states-determinations-under-the-international-religious-freedom-act-of-1998-and-frank-r>
- ². *Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, 1992, Religious and Linguistic Minorities*, A/RES/47/135, Retrieved from the official UN website, 14 /11/ 2025
- ³. *The state of world's human rights report, 2023*, Report Retrieved from the official Amnesty International website, 14 /11/ 2025
- ⁴. *World Report 2024*: Report Retrieved from the official Human Rights Watch website, 14/11/2025
- ⁵. *Pew Research Center's data on Government Restrictions on Religion and Social Hostilities*, typically updated every few years.
- ⁶. *Annual Report 2023*, US Commission on International Religious Freedom, Report Retrieved from the official USCIRF website, 14/11/2025 <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2024/01/22/2024-01084/secretary-of-states-determinations-under-the-international-religious-freedom-act-of-1998-and-frank-r>
- ⁷. Klar, A., & Harel, Y., The psychological basis of collective victimization: Understanding the emergence of the "us vs. them" distinction in the context of political conflict. *Political Psychology*, 2021, 42(2), 291–309.
- ⁸. Juergensmeyer, M. *Terror in the mind of God: The global rise of religious violence*, University of California Press, 2017.
- ⁹. Chomsky, N., & Herman, E. S, *Manufacturing consent: The political economy of the mass media*. Pantheon Books, 2021.
- ¹⁰. *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, United Nations General Assembly, 1948.
- ¹¹. *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights*, UN 1966.
- ¹². <https://www.pakistani.org/pakistan/constitution/part2.ch1.html>
- ¹³. Hehir, A, *Human rights and international relations*. Palgrave Macmillan, 1948, p 74.
- ¹⁴. Ghanea, N, The status of religious minorities under international law: Gaps and cracks, *international Journal on Minority and Group Rights*, 2013, 20(2), 209-236.
- ¹⁵. Al-Qur'ān 49:13.
- ¹⁶. Al-Qur'ān 2:256.
- ¹⁷. Proverbs 22:17-18 (New Living Translation).
- ¹⁸. Romans 12:18 (New Living Translation).
- ¹⁹. Galatians 5:22-23 (New Living Translation).
- ²⁰. 1 Corinthians 1:10 (New Living Translation).
- ²¹. Atharva Veda 6.64.1:
- ²². Rig Veda 10.191.4:
- ²³. Atharva Veda 12.1.12:
- ²⁴. Rig Veda 1.164.46:
- ²⁵. Atharva Veda 13.1.14:
- ²⁶. Yajur Veda 32.16: