



TEXTS ADOPTED

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The abduction, forced conversion and child marriage of Maria Shahbaz and the protection of girls in Pakistan

European Parliament resolution of 9 July 2026 on the abduction, forced conversion and child marriage of Maria Shahbaz and the protection of girls in Pakistan (2026/2801(RSP))

The European Parliament,

- having regard to Rules 150(5) and 136(4) of its Rules of Procedure,
- A. whereas Maria Shahbaz, a Christian girl from Lahore, was 13 when she was abducted and forced to convert to Islam and marry her abductor; whereas her family maintains that her statements were made under duress and coercion; whereas despite documentary evidence confirming her minority status and falsified marriage documents, in March 2026 Pakistan's Federal Constitutional Court upheld her conversion and marriage and ordered her to remain with her abductor;
- B. whereas there is a persistent and well-documented pattern in Pakistan of abduction, forced conversion and forced marriage of underage girls from Hindu, Christian and other religious minorities; whereas, according to 2025 UN figures, among women and girls affected by forced conversion through marriage, around 75 % were Hindu and 25 % were Christian; whereas poverty and marginalisation heighten girls' vulnerability;
- C. whereas the Pakistani Government recently proposed a national framework to end child marriage aimed at strengthening the protection of minors; whereas legislation against child marriage raising the minimum age of marriage to 18 years was adopted in some provinces, which, however, lack enforcement;
- D. whereas Christians are among the most severely persecuted religious communities in Pakistan and the largest worldwide, as demonstrated by the case of Maria Shahbaz;

- E. whereas the case of Maria Shahbaz is emblematic of broader human rights violations faced by minorities in Pakistan, including arbitrary detention, forced disappearances, harassment of journalists and civil society, and misuse of blasphemy, anti-terrorism and cybercrime laws;
1. Strongly condemns the abduction, forced conversion to Islam, child marriage and ruling in the case of Maria Shahbaz, and similar abuses of underage girls from religious minorities in Pakistan;
 2. Calls on the Pakistani Government to ensure that all cases involving minors or allegations of coercion are investigated transparently and independently and to ensure the effective prosecution of perpetrators and safe return of abducted girls;
 3. Calls on the Pakistani authorities to ensure the immediate protection of Maria Shahbaz, to grant her access to legal representation, independent psychological support and to her family, and to conduct a thorough, transparent and impartial review of her case, fulling respecting due process and the best interests of the child and allowing human rights organisations to independently monitor her situation;
 4. Strongly condemns the systematic persecution of Christians in Pakistan and stresses that the abduction, forced conversion and child marriage of Maria Shahbaz must be seen in the wider context of discrimination, violence and intimidation faced by the country's Christian community; demands that Pakistan repeal its blasphemy laws and end the persecution of Christians and other religious minorities;
 5. Urges the Pakistani judiciary to uphold the rule of law and ensure that any proceedings involving girls from minorities are conducted without external pressure, intimidation or coercion; emphasises the need for structured capacity-building within the judiciary in that regard;
 6. Welcomes the legislative steps taken in some provinces against child marriage and urges Pakistan to adopt and fully implement the national framework to end child marriage and to implement and enforce the provincial legislation; calls on other provinces to adopt and implement equivalent legislation;
 7. Encourages Pakistan to create a national mechanism for handling complaints from families of abducted or forcibly converted girls from minorities, and calls for comprehensive support for victims, including safe shelters, legal aid, psychological counselling and reintegration programmes; calls for addressing the root causes of forced marriage and conversion, including gender inequality, poverty, social exclusion and discrimination based on caste, gender and religion, and for targeted protection measures for girls from minorities facing

discrimination, with particular attention paid to accessing education and social protection;

8. Calls for the EU and the Member States to systematically raise the issue of forced conversions and marriages and the protection of religious and other minorities, political opponents, journalists, civil society and human rights defenders and activists in bilateral dialogues with Pakistan, including within the framework of the Generalised Scheme of Preferences Plus monitoring; recalls that failure to effectively implement its human rights commitments, including on women's and children's rights, should result in the withdrawal of Pakistan's GSP+ status;
9. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission, the VP/HR and the Government and Parliament of Pakistan.