RELIGIONS FOR PEACE PAKISTAN · STATEMENT

Declaration to End Child Marriage in Pakistan

Faith in Action: United for the Dignity, Rights and Protection of Children in Pakistan

Issued on 29 October 2026 ◆ **Karachi, Pakistan**

We, the senior religious leaders, women of faith and youth leaders of **Religions for Peace Pakistan**, together with representatives of **UNICEF** and government officials from the Province of Sindh, gathered in Karachi from **27–29 October 2026** for the three-day **Mind–Heart Dialogue Training on Ending Child Marriage** through Faith-Led Dialogue, Partnership and Action Planning. Organized by Religions for Peace Pakistan in collaboration with UNICEF, the training was conducted under the Faith and Positive Change for Children, Families and Communities (FPCC) initiative.

The gathering sought to strengthen faith-based leadership, foster meaningful dialogue and collaboration among religious communities and key stakeholders, and mobilize collective action to end child marriage and safeguard the rights, dignity and well-being of children, especially girls.

> *Guided by our respective Sacred Teachings and Shared Sacred Worldview, in promoting the Shared Sacred Flourishing of all, especially children and girls, we unequivocally* **reject and denounce child marriage** *as a gross violation of child rights and incompatible with the core teachings of our respective faiths.*

We are alarmed

by the extent of the reality of child marriages and its drivers in Pakistan:

- Pakistan is home to nearly **19 million child brides**; 1 in 56 young women aged 20–24 were married in childhood.
- In many Pakistani communities, a girl's marriage is closely linked to family honour, dignity and social respectability, pressuring parents to arrange early marriages to avoid stigma, gossip and perceived disgrace.
- Child marriage is seen as a source of financial relief for families and clans, which is further exacerbated during natural disasters.
- Marriage is widely perceived as a mechanism of moral and religious regulation, serving to protect both boys and girls from engaging in socially deviant behaviour.
- Marriage is seen as a catalyst for the transition from youth to adulthood, and reinforces traditional gender roles, positioning women as homemakers, child bearers and caretakers, and men as providers and heads of the household.

Our Commitment

1. We pledge to issue public statements to clarify religious misinterpretations used to justify these practices.
2. We will mobilize and convene faith leaders, from the top leadership to the grassroots, to dialogue and build a common understanding with resistant religious groups for a unified voice against child marriage.
3. We commit to working with parents, families, community elders, women and young people to challenge harmful social norms and practices that contribute to child marriage.

4. Through dialogue and community engagement, we will promote positive attitudes towards girls' education, health, safety and well-being.

5. We will support the meaningful participation of women and youth in faith-led initiatives and community discussions in addressing the causes and consequences of child marriage.

6. We will raise awareness amongst communities of the laws and policies concerning child marriage in Pakistan and support their effective implementation through collaboration with government authorities, religious scholars, marriage registrars and other relevant actors, to strengthen understanding of the legal protections available to children.

7. We will support national and provincial plans and frameworks to prevent child marriage, and engage in national and provincial policy platforms and technical working groups to strengthen and harmonize laws and enforcement mechanisms that criminalize harmful practices.

We call upon

1. **All faith leaders,** including women of faith and youth leaders across religions in Pakistan, to rise and speak with one voice in defence of children and the abandonment of child marriage.

2. **Federal and provincial governments** to strengthen the implementation of laws and policies aimed at preventing child marriage, improve birth and marriage registration systems, and ensure that children at risk have access to protection and support services.

3. **Parents, families and community elders** to reject practices that place children at risk and to prioritize the education, health, safety and well-being of girls and boys.

4. **Civil society organizations, educational institutions and development partners** to work closely with religious communities in addressing the social and economic factors that contribute to child marriage, supporting sustainable community-led solutions and ensuring education for all children in Pakistan, especially girls.

5 **Media houses and influencers** to collaborate with senior religious leaders, women of faith and religious youth leaders in creating positive narratives of hope, protection and justice.

6 **All community members** to break the silence, reject harmful traditions and protect every child's right to safety, education and dignity.

We recognize that the progress made so far in reducing the prevalence of these practices across Pakistan is undeniable, but there is still more to be done to protect and advance child rights. We commit to support coalitions and movements in this cause — **guided by faith, informed by evidence and driven by justice.**

ADOPTED UNANIMOUSLY
29 October 2026 · Karachi

Presented by

Advocate Huma Ikramullah

Secretary General, Religions for Peace Pakistan
Associate Secretary General, Religions for Peace Asia
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Endorsed by

All participating senior religious leaders, women of faith and youth leaders

Muslim · Hindu · Christian · Sikh · Parsi

Ministry of Human Rights

UNICEF · Religions for Peace Pakistan · Religions for Peace Asia · Religions for Peace International

Together, for every child.