



Department of Social Development and World Peace

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November 17, 2005

The Honorable Jehangir Karamat
Ambassador of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan
3517 International Court, NW
Washington, DC 20008

Dear Mr. Ambassador,

I write concerning the horrific anti-Christian events that occurred in Sangla Hills on November 12th. As you must be aware, mobs numbering in the hundreds, even up to two thousand according to some reports, attacked, ransacked and burned three churches—Catholic, Presbyterian and Salvation Army—a sisters' convent, a girls' hostel, a Catholic school and the pastor's house.

Early accounts suggest that this was an organized act of terrorism, aimed at intimidating the Christian families in the region. The all too convenient excuse of an alleged desecration of the Holy Quran by one individual, even if such occurred, which seems doubtful, could never justify such wanton acts against innocent people. It is especially distressing at this time when much of the country is still reeling from the October 8th tragic earthquake and when so many in the Christian community in Pakistan, including our own Catholic Relief Services, are working with dedication to bring relief to the survivors.

The day following the attacks, Sunday November 13th, the Christians of Sangla Hill held a joint ecumenical prayer service led by the Catholic and Presbyterian pastors and then processed peacefully and prayerfully to the sites of the attacks. The Catholic and Protestant bishops of Pakistan dedicated today, November 17th as a Day of Protest on which all Christian schools were to be closed as a sign of protest and mourning.

We join with Archbishop Lawrence Saldanha of Lahore, President of the Pakistan Bishops' Conference, in calling for a thorough investigation of these tragic occurrences. If it is clear that there was negligence on the part of the local police, measures should be taken to prevent a recurrence. In the Archbishop's view, the Blasphemy Laws contribute to social, sectarian and inter-religious disharmony in the country and must be re-examined. The government should take affirmative steps to educate the people about tolerance and peace, remove religious biases in teaching materials, and repeal discriminatory laws.

With the prayer that this sad event may serve to bring about greater harmony and peace among all the people of your great nation, I am

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Bishop Thomas G. Wenski
Bishop of Orlando
Chairman, Committee on International Policy