

Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and earlier participated positively in the Beijing Women's Conference. The Lahore High Court has ruled that a Muslim woman has an unconditional right to *Khula* (divorce) and to choose her own husband.

Child labour is part of the economic and social fabric. At least five million children work, many under exploitative conditions or in bondage; few receive formal education. Many others work in small family businesses or family farms. Pakistan ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child with a number of reservations, including the caveat that provisions would not apply where Islamic values and law prevail. The South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), of which Pakistan is a member, agreed to eliminate child labour by 2010. Given the attitudes of many Pakistanis (officials, politicians, landowners, businesspeople) and economic imperatives, the problem is likely to change only slowly.

The Ahmadis, a religious minority, are the targets of religious vilification and systematic persecution. The Ahmadis regard themselves as Muslims. They believe Muhammad was the last "law-bearing" prophet, but not the very last prophet. These claims, and Ahmadi proselytising efforts, offend many orthodox Muslims. Blasphemy laws have been extensively used to abridge their religious freedom, and violence against Ahmadis often goes unpunished. Christians have at times also been caught up in this discriminatory atmosphere. The most blatant example was the mob attack against hundreds of Christian homes and property in February 1997 in Khanawal; the authorities responded immediately and strongly condemned the attack.

CANADIAN POSITION

Canada has maintained a dialogue with Pakistan on human rights. Issues such as religious discrimination, reflecting the concerns of the Ahmadiya and Christian communities in Canada, women's rights, and child labour, have been addressed multilaterally and in meetings with Pakistani officials, the most recent being the Senior Officials Meeting which took place in Islamabad in December 1997.

Canada has sought to engage human rights issues in a constructive manner, providing support to human rights NGOs, supplying information related to blasphemy litigation, and Canada's Access to Information and Privacy legislation. Canada is giving higher priority in its assistance programming in Pakistan to social development, a reflection of our view that economic and social underdevelopment contributes to human rights abuses, particularly for women and children. Canada's development cooperation in Pakistan also emphasizes governance, with the aim of strengthening those community and governmental institutions which underpin progress in human rights and the development of civil society. All CIDA projects are designed and monitored to maximize the involvement of women. Since 1996, CIDA's Women's Development Project has supported organizations working with women in areas such as human rights activities, family planning, education, and economic development.