

## PRESS RELEASE

Date: 14 April, 2007

### **Government urged to do more for protection of Minorities**

Peshawar: Minorities are an integral part of Pakistan and they are equally loyal to country with Muslim majority. Islamic principles and Pakistan constitution provides for equal rights to all human beings irrespective of race ,sex or religion .Despite of the constitutional provisions ,minorities in Pakistan are facing lot of problems and aren't feeling protected. Government should do more and more for protection of religious minorities and for their religious freedom. This was said by Chairman Parliamentarians Commission for Human Rights (PCHR) Mr Riaz Fatyana MNA while addressing a group discussion on “ Protection of Minorities Rights “in Peshawar. Discussion was attended by Member NA standing Committee on Minorities Ms Riffat Javed Kahloon MNA, Chief Whip Muttahida Majlis-e-Amal Maulana Rehmat Ullah MNA, Gur Saran Lal MPA,Mr Kamran Arif Advocate Vice Chairperson HRCP, representatives of different NGOs and Leaders of minority communities.

Chairman PCHR Riaz Fatyana MNA stated that in Pakistan minorities are not provided with their due rights. Despite of present Govts positive steps like introduction of joint electorate and ensuring their representation in local bodies, the minorities are still facing different forms of discrimination. Infact there is need to change the attitude and overall mindset of the society toward minorities. We need to promote the respect of others faiths and beliefs. It is responsibility of leaders of majority community and particularly the religious scholars to teach the society about unity and mutual respect. It is the time when we should work together for national interest and discourage each and every effort of dividing the Pakistani nation.

Chief Whip MMA Maulana Rehmatullah ,while addressing the seminar as Chief Guest said that Islam is the most peaceful religion of the world and only solution to present day situation of conflicts and distrust. He said that Islam gives special protection to minorities and MMA govt is fully aware of its responsibilities in this regard .He said that hate speech is a wrong thing and pledged to take notice if such incidents would be brought to his notice. He also assured minority leaders that provincial govt will protect their places of worship and nobody will be allowed to damage them.

Ms. Riffat Javed Kahloon MNA said that protection of minorities is sensitive issue in Pakistan and we should initiate open dialogue with minorities to understand their problems, She said it is only possible through positive discussion that issues of social discrimination and religious intolerance could be addressed.

Gur Saran Lal member of Provincial Assembly Peshawar said, social discrimination is at its peak in society at this time. He demanded the government to provide protection to minorities religious places. He stressed on religious leaders to play their due role efficiently to eliminate social differences and cultivate religious harmony in society through their messages.

Chief Coordinator Shafique Chaudhary, starting the discussion said that it is responsibility of state to provide protection to the minorities and provide them their basic rights. Minorities are being treated as second class citizens. They are faced abhorrence, discrimination and unfair attitude of society.

Kamran Arif Advocate underlined the need of more strong legal mechanism for minorities protection .he also emphasized to reform the ages old personal laws of minorities. Earlier, Minority community leaders ,Ram Lal,President Hindu Panchayat Peshawar, Ch Rehmat Lal form Nowshera and Shiyam babu from Boner complained about the general discriminatory behavoiur of society and showed their deep concern over negative role of clerics in promoting hate speech. They also demanded that these discussion should be organized also at district levels with proper involvement of relevant district authorities.

Media Cell, PCHR