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17 January 2019

PAK106219.E

Pakistan: Treatment of sexual and gender minorities by society and authorities; state protection and support services available (2017-January 2019)

Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, Ottawa

1. Legislation and Enforcement

For information on legislation that prohibits same-sex sexual acts between men in Pakistan, see Response to Information Request PAK104712 of January 2014.

According to sources, under Sharia law, homosexuals face the death penalty in Pakistan (AFP 29 Oct. 2018; Pakistan 2018).

In a May 2017 report, the International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association (ILGA) reports that documented arrests of homosexuals in Pakistan have occurred in the past three years (ILGA May 2017, 194). Other sources indicate that same-sex sexual acts are "rarely" prosecuted in Pakistan (US 20 Apr. 2018, 45; Australia 1 Sept. 2017, para. 3.134). Agence France-Presse (AFP) reports that Pakistan has never convicted anyone for homosexual acts (AFP 29 Oct. 2018). ILGA states that the death penalty is "not implemented for same-sex [sexual] behaviour specifically" (ILGA May 2017, 40).

In its *Global Aids Monitoring 2018* country progress report, Pakistan indicates that transgender people are "[n]either criminalized nor prosecuted" (Pakistan 2018).

According to sources, a "third gender" category is recognized in Pakistan for transgender persons (FDI and NAZ Pakistan Oct./Nov. 2017, para. 9; Australia 1 Sept. 2017, para. 3.136; Freedom House 2018) and intersex persons (Freedom House 2018). The option is available on national identity cards (FDI and NAZ Pakistan Oct./Nov. 2017, para. 9; Amnesty International 22 Feb. 2018; Australia 1 Sept. 2017, para. 3.136). According to a 2017 submission by Pakistan to the UN's Universal Periodic Review (UPR), the "Supreme Court directed the National Database Regulatory Authority to issue national identity cards and passports to transgender persons" (Pakistan 4 Sept. 2017, para. 12). Human Rights Watch reports that the Pakistani government issued the first passport with a "transgender category" in June [2017] (Human Rights Watch 18 Jan. 2018, 5).

2. Situation of Sexual and Gender Minorities

According to sources, sexual minorities in Pakistan are "deterred" from acknowledging" (Freedom House 2018) or "reluctant to reveal" their sexual orientation or gender identity (UN 23 Aug. 2017, para. 17). According to a report by the European Asylum Support Office (EASO) of the EU on an October 2017 meeting on Pakistan, citing a Country of Origin (COI) researcher from the Office of the Belgian Commissioner General for Refugees and Stateless Persons (CGRS), the LGBT community in Pakistan operates "behind closed doors" (EU Feb. 2018, 45).

2.1 Sexual Minorities

AFP reports that, according to the president of NAZ, an LGBT organization in Pakistan, [translation] "90% of Pakistani men are MSM [men who have sex with men] simply because women are not easily accessible" (AFP 29 Oct. 2018). Without providing further details, the CGRS researcher cited in the EASO meeting report on Pakistan, indicated that "[s]ources stated that it is common for straight men to indulge in Male to Male sex (MSM) and there is general acceptance within [Pakistani] society for this particular act" (EU Feb. 2018, 45). For information about MSM in Pakistan, see Response to Information Request PAK104712 of January 2014.

However, AFP reports that homosexuality is [translation] "strictly ignored" and that "LGBT associations only openly advocate for transgender rights, which are culturally accepted in Pakistan. They treat homosexuality only in the framework of the fight against AIDS" (AFP 29 Oct. 2018). In correspondence with the Research Directorate, the Director of the Neengar Society, an NGO promoting the human rights of youth and sexual minorities, among other groups, in Pakistan (TakingITGlobal n.d.), similarly stated that "[s]exual minorities, except for transgender people, cannot live... openly. There is a clear risk of discrimination, violence, social boycott and degradation in social class and rank. In some cases a serious threat [to] life is also involved" (Neengar Society 6 Jan. 2019).

A Pakistani actor, who made an appearance as a crossdresser on a very popular talk show, is cited by AFP as stating the following: [translation] "'[w]e live in a culture of hypocrisy. In Pakistan, you can do whatever you want behind closed doors. ... But if you want to let it be known, there will be no tolerance. You will be persecuted'" (AFP 29 Oct. 2018). A country report on Pakistan by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) of Australia similarly states that "[s]ame-sex attracted people are highly constrained by cultural, religious and social intolerance of homosexuality" (Australia 1 Sept. 2017, para. 3.134).

2.2 Transgender People

According to the 2017 population census, the transgender population of Pakistan is 10,418 persons, of which approximately 73 percent live in urban areas (Pakistan 2017). Transgender and human rights organizations, however, consider government figures to under-estimate Pakistan's transgender population (Human Rights Watch 18 Jan. 2018, 5; Reuters 6 Oct. 2017). Reuters cites the head of "Jiya,

a transgender rights group in the port city of Karachi," as estimating the transgender population in Pakistan at 300,000 (Reuters 6 Oct. 2017). The same source cites the head of the Khawaja Sira Society, "a Lahore-based working group for the rights of transgender people," as stating that "[i]n the province of Punjab alone" the transgender population is "anywhere between 400,000 to 500,000," noting that their organization provides health services for "over 30,000 transgende[r] [persons] in Lahore city alone" (Reuters 6 Oct. 2017). The Pakistani English-language newspaper *The Nation* reports that the transgender population is estimated by TransAction [1] to be approximately two million (*The Nation* 23 Oct. 2017). Reuters reports that, according to the head of the Khawaja Sira Society, the census "identified transgender people according to their national identity cards[,] ... [b]ut many transgender people identify as male or female rather than third gender on their cards to avoid discrimination" (Reuters 6 Oct. 2017). Corroborating information could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

3. Treatment by Society

Sources state that sexual and gender minorities face "discrimination" in Pakistan (Freedom House 2018; Australia 1 Sept. 2017, para. 3.134-3.135).

The Australian DFAT report states that sexual minorities can be rejected and "thrown out" of their homes by their families (Australia 1 Sept. 2017, para. 3.134). The same sources also states the following:

As with many other issues, the extent of familial and societal discrimination and violence faced by lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) people tends to be inversely proportional to their socio-economic status. Credible sources told DFAT that wealthy individuals from influential families in large urban centres face fewer constraints than poor people in rural areas. Nonetheless, even wealthy individuals face high levels of discrimination, and are often forced into a heterosexual marriage to preserve the family's reputation and social standing. (Australia 1 Sept. 2017, para. 3.135)

The Director of the Neengar Society stated that "individuals belonging to low socio-economic groups have limited access to justice, sexual and reproductive health rights and safety" and that out of 150 cases reported to their legal aid center, 135 "belonged to [a] low socio-economic class" (Neengar Society 6 Jan. 2019).

3.1 Treatment of Transgender Persons

Sources state that transgender persons are "marginalised" (*The Nation* 23 Oct. 2018) or "ostracized" by society (FDI and NAZ Pakistan Oct./Nov. 2017, para. 6). The BBC reports that "[t]ransgender men ... are barely visible in the public sphere as a result of the social and cultural expectations of those who are assigned female at birth. Transgender women, meanwhile, are marginalised by society from an early age" (BBC 20 July 2018). According to sources, transgender people can be "disowned" by their families (BBC 26 Mar. 2018; FDI and NAZ Pakistan Oct./Nov. 2017, para. 6).

According to the Australian DFAT report, transgender people "tend to live together in poorer communities within large urban centres" (Australia 1 Sept. 2017, para. 3.136). According to a joint submission to the UN Universal Periodic Review (UPR) on Pakistan by the Forum for Dignity Initiatives (FDI) [2] and NAZ Pakistan, "[t]ransgender women, in particular, live in groups for protection and survival" (FDI and NAZ Pakistan Oct./Nov. 2017, para. 6). The US Department of State's *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2017* states the following:

According to a wide range of LGBT NGOs and activists, society generally shun[s] transgender women, eunuchs, and intersex persons, collectively referred to as "hijras" - a word some transgender individuals view as pejorative, preferring the term "khwaja serra" - who often lived together in slum communities and survived by begging and dancing at carnivals and weddings. Some also were prostitutes. (US 20 Apr. 2018, 45)

Media sources have also reported that transgender people are "forced" to "danc[e]," "be[g]" or become sex workers in order to earn money (*The Nation* 23 Oct. 2018; BBC 26 Mar. 2018). The Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP) [3] reports that, in a panel discussion it organized on harassment and violence against transgender people, there was a "consensus among the speakers" that

LGBT communities are considered a sign of shame and disgrace in [Pakistani] culture. Most of these individuals never get a chance to acquire education in the regular schools due to discriminatory treatment and demeaning attitudes of their fellow citizens. ... In case of any criminal victimization or even sexual harassment, they get no support from the mainstream community ... Consequently, this presents members of these communities with virtually no job opportunities and financial security, and most members of the transgender community are forced to make their living by prostitution. (HRCP 20 Nov. 2017)

FDI and NAZ Pakistan report that "[t]ransgender people, in particular transgender women, face harassment, mistreatment and exclusion from society[,] [as well as in] the public health care system, education system[,] and [in] employment and other institutions of [g]overnment" (FDI and NAZ Pakistan Oct./Nov. 2017, para. 3). The same source also states that discrimination against transgender persons also includes housing, as "[r]enting a house is particularly challenging as landlords usually refuse to accept them as tenants. Those who do usually extort higher rent and refuse to sign a legal contract" (FDI and NAZ Pakistan Oct./Nov. 2017, para. 7). *US Country Reports 2017* similarly states that "[l]ocal authorities often denied transgender individuals places in schools or admission to hospitals, and landlords often refused to rent or sell property to them. Authorities often denied transgender individuals their share of inherited property" (US 20 Apr. 2018, 45). Freedom House also indicates that transgender and intersex persons face "discrimination in housing and employment" (Freedom House 2018).

Sources report that the first Pakistani transgender news anchor was hired by a private [TV] station in 2018 (BBC 26 Mar. 2018; Amnesty International 25 May 2018).

3.2 Violence

Sources state that sexual minorities are subjected to violence in Pakistan (Freedom House 2018; Australia 1 Sept. 2017, para. 3.134).

The US Department of State's *Trafficking in Persons Report 2018* indicates that LGBTI individuals are "exploit[ed]" in sex trafficking and that some victims are offered for sale in "physical markets" (US 28 June 2018). FDI and NAZ Pakistan also note that transgender persons are subjected to trafficking (FDI and NAZ Pakistan Oct./Nov. 2017, para. 3).

An article by the UK-based newspaper *Manchester Evening News* describes the experience of a Pakistani Muslim lesbian who was "beaten, humiliated and threatened because of her sexuality," stating that she was kicked out of university when her colleagues found out about her sexual orientation (*Manchester Evening News* 28 Oct. 2018). AFP quotes a Pakistani lesbian as stating the following: [translation] "'If my family found out, there is no doubt that I would be locked up somewhere, or killed'" (AFP 29 Oct. 2018). While homosexuality is taboo and is [translation] "criminally repressed, ... the first danger comes from relatives, in this conservative Muslim country" (AFP 29 Oct. 2018). The same source further reports that, although Pakistan has not convicted sexual minorities on the grounds of anti-homosexuality legislation, the situation is different within families, as [translation] "hundreds of homicides are committed each year in the country in the name of family 'honour'" (AFP 29 Oct. 2018). Information on specific instances of violence against sexual minorities could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

3.2.1 Violence Against Transgender People

Sources indicate that intersex (Human Rights Watch 18 Jan. 2018, 5) and transgender persons experience violence in Pakistan (Human Rights Watch 18 Jan. 2018, 5; FDI and NAZ Pakistan Oct./Nov. 2017, para. 3). Sources have also reported that transgender people experience sexual violence (Amnesty International 22 Feb. 2018; FDI and NAZ Pakistan Oct./Nov. 2017, para. 15).

Sources report instances of killings of transgender people in Pakistan (RFE/RL 28 Mar. 2018; FDI and NAZ Pakistan Oct./Nov. 2017, para. 15; *The Nation* 23 Oct. 2017). In May 2018, Human Rights Watch indicated that, "according to local activists," 57 transgender women have been killed in Pakistan since 2015, including 4 in 2018 (Human Rights Watch 8 May 2018).

FDI and NAZ Pakistan indicate that Blue Veins, a Pakistani NGO "working for the well-being and protection of women/girls and the transgender community" (Blue Veins n.d.), has documented 46 killings and 300 violent attacks on transgender women in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province between January 2015 and July 2016 (FDI and NAZ Pakistan Oct./Nov. 2017, para. 15). The BBC reports that according to local activists, "almost 60 transgender women have been killed over the past three years" in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (that is, since 2015) (BBC 20 July 2018). Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (RFE/RL) reports that the president of the Transgender Association stated that 62 transgender persons have been killed since 2015 and that "478 violent attacks had been reported against transgender people in the [Khyber Pakhtunkhwa] province so far in 2018" (RFE/RL 20 Aug. 2018). The same source reports that "TransAction Pakistan, an activist group supporting the rights of transgender persons, says at least 1,133 cases of violence were committed against members of the transgender community in the [Khyber Pakhtunkhwa] province from 2015 to 2017" (RFE/RL 20 Aug. 2018).

Sources also report that "hate crimes" [or "honour killings" (BBC 20 July 2018)] have been committed against transgender people (PinkNews 8 Dec. 2018; BBC 20 July 2018). A transgender independent candidate for the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa provincial assembly told the BBC that "hate crimes, or so-called honour killings, are the biggest threat to the local transgender community ... 'Our own family hires people to murder us'" (BBC 20 July 2018).

FDI and Naz Pakistan report that

[t]ransgender individuals are often responsible for financially supporting their biological families who often resort to abuse, violence and torture to maintain their control over them. Forced marriages, physical and emotional torture are the common forms of abuses against them, recorded by many studies done by various organizations. (FDI and NAZ Oct./Nov. 2017, para. 16)

Further and corroborating information could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

4. Treatment by the Authorities

According to its report on Pakistan, the Australian DFAT "assesses that LGBTI people in Pakistan face high levels of official ... discrimination" (Australia 1 Sept. 2017, para. 3.138). According to Human Rights Watch, there is "government persecution" towards transgender persons (Human Rights Watch 18 Jan. 2018, 1).

According to ILGA, Pakistan has "a [n]ational [h]uman [r]ights [i]nstitution ... that includes sexual orientation in its human rights work" (ILGA May 2017, 195). In its UPR submission, Pakistan reports that

[t]he issue of transgender [persons] is being discussed at different forums which include [the] Senate's Special Committee on Marginalized Segments of Society, [the] Senate's Functional Committee on Human Rights and [the] National Council for Social Welfare and Capital Administration and Development Division. (Pakistan 4 Sept. 2017, para. 12).

FDI and NAZ Pakistan indicate that "a two percent reserved quota [for] government jobs" is reserved to transgender people and that funds were allocated to the 2016-2017 Khyber Pakhtunkhwa budget for the "welfare of the transgender" (FDI and Naz Pakistan Oct./Nov. 2017, para. 9). Sources also note that transgender people were included in the Pakistani population census for the first time in 2017 (Amnesty International 22 Feb. 2018; UN 4 Sept. 2017, para. 14). Other sources indicate that transgender people have the right to vote and to participate in elections as candidates (RFE/RL 20 Aug. 2018; US 20 Apr. 2018, 45). Media sources also report on transgender candidates running for elections (PinkNews 8 Dec. 2018; BBC 20 July 2018). Information on election results for transgender candidates could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

4.1 Treatment by Police

According to *US Country Reports 2017*, the police "generally refused to take action on cases involving members of the LGBTI community" (US 20 Apr. 2018, 45).

Sources report that MSM have been extorted by authorities (Neengar Society 6 Jan. 2019; AFP 29 Oct. 2018; Australia 1 Sept. 2017, para. 3.134), including by police (Neengar Society 6 Jan. 2019; AFP 29 Oct. 2018). Further information on the treatment of sexual minorities by the police could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

4.1.1 Transgender People

Concerning treatment of transgender persons by law enforcement agencies, FDI and NAZ Pakistan indicate the following:

The police harass and mock the [t]ransgender complainants, and often make sexual advances. A complaint is rarely registered, and they exhibit an indifferent attitude. The transgender communities feel scared and intimidated by the police and often choose not to report the crimes. The police's reputation is further tarnished in the community because of its pattern of profiling [transgender persons] and harassing them in public spaces. (FDI and NAZ Pakistan Oct./Nov. 2017, para. 26)

Human Rights Watch also reports that,

[a]ccording to transgender rights groups, on occasions the police have taken transgender women to the police station[;] they taunted them, forcibly removed their clothing, ordered them to dance, and poured cold water on them when they refused. Those who complained were subjected to more abuse. (Human Rights Watch 8 May 2018)

FDI and NAZ Pakistan also state the following in their 2017 UPR submission:

In the last years, many cases have been reported where transgender women in Pakistan have been illegally arrested by the police using provisions of the law that criminalize same sex relationships and they have been charged with cases related to defying the order of nature (unnatural offence against the order of nature), public nascence [*sic*], unnatural offences and indecent assault. (FDI and NAZ Pakistan Oct./Nov. 2017, para. 24)

Sources indicate that the response of the authorities to complaints by transgender people is inadequate (PinkNews 8 Dec. 2018; FDI and NAZ Pakistan Oct./Nov. 2017, para. 26). According to FDI and NAZ Pakistan, "[i]f and when a [police] complaint is registered, the prosecution is weak, and cases take too long to reach completion, as a result of which many people choose not to follow a legal recourse" (FDI and NAZ Pakistan Oct./Nov. 2017, para. 26). PinkNews, a website that covers LGBT issues, cites a transgender activist as stating the following: "Whenever we go to them to register our complaint of any incidence of violence, we are refused our right of lodging [a First Information Report (FIR)]" (PinkNews 8 Dec. 2018, square brackets in original). Sources also mention incidents in which cases of

violence against transgender persons have been reported to police, and in which the police did not pursue a case or take action (PinkNews 8 Dec. 2018; Human Rights Watch 8 May 2018).

5. State Protection

US Country Reports 2017 states that "[n]o laws protect against discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation or gender identity" in Pakistan (US 20 Apr. 2018, 45). In March 2018, the International Federation for Human Rights (Fédération internationale des ligues des droits de l'homme, FIDH) indicated that, in the assessment of Pakistan's human rights situation during its third UPR, "[t]he government failed to accept all seven recommendations that called for the protection of [LGBTI] people from violence and discrimination and for the protection of their rights" (FIDH 15 Mar. 2018). ILGA also notes that "Pakistan has opposed SOGI [sexual orientation and gender identity] in international human rights fora" (ILGA May 2017, 175). The Director of the Neengar Society stated that the Pakistani "government does not support the work of LGBTQI advocacy organizations" (Neengar Society 6 Jan. 2019). Corroborating information could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

The Director of the Neengar Society indicated that "[s]eeking police protection on the grounds of sexual orientation is not possible" in Pakistan and that "[r]elevant clauses do not exist in the Pakistani Penal Code or Code of Criminal Procedure" (Neengar Society 6 Jan. 2019). However, the same source also stated the following:

During recent years there have been reported cases of individuals who were arrested for crimes against members of sexual minorities. Although it is important to note that arrests are only made in cases of heinous offences [such as] murder, rape, physical torture, etc. Other cases like sexual harassment, homophobia, and extortion usually go unreported due to victims' fear of defamation and persecution. (Neengar Society 6 Jan. 2019)

Regarding the obstacles for sexual and gender minorities to report incidents to police, the same source further stated that having one's "sexual orientation or gender identity [revealed] might increase risks and threats to safety and life of an individual" (Neengar Society 6 Jan. 2019).

According to Human Rights Watch, the Pakistani authorities do not "provide adequate protection" to transgender people or "hold perpetrators accountable" (Human Rights Watch 18 Jan. 2018, 1). *The Nation's* article on attacks against transgender persons reports that the Pakistani state "does nothing to protect them against the constant attacks they face on a daily basis" (*The Nation* 23 Oct. 2017). RFE/RL reports that "[d]ozens of transgender people" protested in Peshawar in August 2018 to demand more protection from violent crimes (RFE/RL 20 Aug. 2018).

Sources report that the *Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act* was passed in Pakistan in May 2018 (ILGA Asia 12 June 2018; Amnesty International 25 May 2018). ILGA Asia reports that this act "recognizes [the] gender identity of a person as self-perceived as male, female, or a blend of both, or neither; while everyone can express their gender however they wish" (ILGA Asia 12 June 2018). Sources indicate that the legislation prohibits discrimination (PinkNews 8 Dec. 2018; *Libération* 11 May 2018; Neengar Society 6 Jan. 2019) and harassment (*Libération* 11 May 2018; Neengar Society 6 Jan. 2019) against transgender persons in:

- employment (PinkNews 8 Dec. 2018; *Libération* 11 May 2018; Neengar Society 6 Jan. 2019);
- healthcare (PinkNews 8 Dec. 2018; *Libération* 11 May 2018; Neengar Society 6 Jan. 2019);
- schools (*Libération* 11 May 2018);
- housing (PinkNews 8 Dec. 2018; Neengar Society 6 Jan. 2019);
- and public transportation (PinkNews 8 Dec. 2018) or in public places (*Libération* 11 May 2018).

According to ILGA Asia,

[t]he move was widely celebrated by the LGBTI community in the country and worldwide.

This achievement was [the result of] years of advocacy efforts by Pakistani transgender activists. The approved [a]ct was very close to what had been proposed by community, including the hijras, transgender women who were not part of the hijra community, and transgender men who had been neglected in the past. (ILGA Asia 12 June 2018)

A copy of the *Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act* is attached to this response. Information on enforcement of this act could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

6. Support Services

The July 2018 BBC article reports that "[m]any" transgender persons "seek safety with gurus - leaders of small, scattered transgender communities - who give them food and shelter in return for their service and contribution to the group" (BBC 20 July 2018). The Australian DFAT report mentions that a "number of community organisations exist in some major urban centres to provide medical and support services to the LGBTI community" (Australia 1 Sept. 2017, para. 3.137). The Director of the Neengar Society stated that currently, there are no organizations providing temporary emergency shelter for sexual minorities (Neengar Society 6 Jan. 2019). Corroborating information could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

Information on organizations that provide support and services to sexual and gender minorities was scarce among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response. The Neengar Society "launched a legal aid center in 2015 to extend paralegal and legal aid, consultation and support to members of sexual minorities" (Neengar Society 6 Jan. 2019).

The Forum for Dignity Initiatives (FDI) is a research and advocacy forum working for sexual and gender minorities in Pakistan ... [Their] activism promotes empowerment and understanding through community[-] motivated initiatives to improve the human rights situation of these groups. FDI initiatives include conducting research, advocating for legal rights, raising awareness and building capacity. [They] collaborate with multiple stakeholders including the government, civil society networks and like-minded groups. FDI lobbies and

campaigns for voting opportunities. [They] discourage discrimination through the cis-heteronormative society by facilitating dialogues, debates, experience sharing and information dissemination. (FDI n.d.)

The NAZ Male Health Alliance, established in 2011, is an LGBT community[-]based organisation in Pakistan, and is providing technical, financial and institutional support for improving the sexual health, welfare and human rights of the LGBT community throughout the country. They do this by providing technical support and capacity[-]building exercises to various stake holders, networks, groups and organisations. (The Commonwealth Equality Network n.d.)

Blue Veins is an NGO working in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa that is "committed to build, strengthen and galvanize women & transgender person[s'] collective power for a just and sustainable world - for all" (BlueVeins n.d.).

The Gender Interactive Alliance Pakistan (GIA) work[s] for the equality and civil rights of transgender people in Pakistan.

...

Among [their] foremost projects is to lobby the government of Pakistan for: recognition of transgender people as equal citizens of Pakistan; providing free medical care to transgender people who are routinely denied public healthcare; and enabling entrepreneurship by providing economic opportunities for transgender people who are, by and large, left out of the mainstream economy. [They] also aim to provide a safe space for these people online so that their stories and experiences are not erased from our collective cultural experience. (GIA n.d.)

The Khawaja Sira Society (KSS) was "founded by Naz Male Health Society under the Global Fund Grant Round 9 in 2010 [and] is Pakistan's first and biggest transgender community organization with 300,000 members, volunteers and associates across the country" (APCOM 23 Dec. 2015). Their "vision is to ensure that transgender individuals have the same rights [as] their cisgender counterparts" (APCOM 23 Dec. 2015). KSS runs a "comprehensive voluntary counseling and HIV test (VCT) for hijra communities"; 13,000 transgender persons have been registered in KSS's VCT programmes (APCOM 23 Dec. 2015).

TransAction, a network that was established by transgender and intersex activists in 2015 to focus on transgender and intersex issues, raises "awareness through education and training to the transgender and intersex community, their families and general society," in "disadvantaged communities [in] Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Federally Administrated Tribal Areas (FATA)" (TransAction n.d.b).

This Response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Research Directorate within time constraints. This Response is not, and does not purport to be, conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim for refugee protection. Please find below the list of sources consulted in researching this Information Request.

Notes

[1] TransAction is an organization working for the protection of transgender and intersex persons in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (TransAction n.d.a).

[2] The Forum for Dignity Initiatives (FDI) is "a research and advocacy forum working for sexual and gender minorities in Pakistan" (FDI n.d.).

[3] The Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP) is an independent NGO working for "the provision of human rights for all and democratic development in Pakistan" (HRCP n.d.). It monitors human rights violations; seeks redress through public campaigns, lobbying and intervention in courts; and organizes seminars, workshops and fact-finding missions (HRCP n.d.).

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