

# Narratives of Marginalization



## Reporting Religious Minorities in Pakistani Media

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# Narratives of Marginalization: Reporting Religious Minorities in Pakistani Media

A quantitative and qualitative analysis of television, radio, print and online news media content

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**Disclaimer:** This research study was conducted by the Institute for Research, Advocacy and Development (**IRADA**), a registered Pakistan-based civil society organization focusing on social development and promotion of civil liberties with technical assistance of the International Media Support (**IMS**). However, neither IMS nor IRADA have to necessarily be in agreement with the findings of this report, which is produced in good faith based on monitoring and evaluation of the content of a pre-selected sample of media during a pre-selected limited time duration (October 8-21, 2018). None of the media content produced was by either these two organizations or by any of the researchers and analysts.



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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Pakistan is a country in transition. A general election was held in 2018 after five years with a rare transfer of power from one civilian dispensation to another. A national census was held for the first time in nearly two decades in 2017 that reveals that the overall population of religious minorities has declined. The country's media landscape has transformed in recent years from a mostly state-controlled regime to a thriving private industry. Online spaces have grown with online-only news media and use of social media expanding rapidly. The general media narratives are shifting from an elitist obsession around power politics to a discourse centered on human rights. Pakistan's political, religious, ethnic, linguist and cultural pluralisms are a subject ripe for deeper examination.

It is in this context that this study on how Pakistan's diverse array of religious minorities (RMs), which is small percentage-wise but which runs into millions in numbers, is finding itself in terms of representation in media coverage about the overall society and polity in transition. To analyze this, this study employs two research questions that reveal the following answers:

### **Research Question (RQ) 1:**

#### **What characterizes the coverage of religious minorities in Pakistan?**

The answer to this research question was determined as a review of the general quantum of news and images related to RMs and which media carry how much coverage of them; the frequency of various RMs featured in the media coverage and whether the focus on RMs in the coverage is central to it or incidental. The conclusive findings to this question:

The overall media coverage of RMs in quantum terms is generally low and the most widely available media – TV and radio – carry very little or no coverage of them at all. Hindus and Christian communities are the focus of almost all of what little coverage of RMs is available with other minorities such as Ahmedis, Sikhs, Buddhists, Kailash, etc., get almost no coverage. Most coverage of RMs has a principal focus on them but nearly a third don't.

### **Research Question (RQ) 2:**

#### **How are religious minorities represented in the media in Pakistan?**

The answer to this question was determined through a review of the most dominant themes characterizing the coverage of RMs, the news sources used in the coverage, the gender diversity in perspectives to this coverage, the stereotypes and frames in which they were portrayed and the tone of the coverage towards them. The conclusive findings to this question:

The overall media coverage of RMs in qualitative terms is generally stereotypical linked to sensitive themes such as blasphemy. The minorities are generally painted in a victimhood framework. Most coverage about them does not even include their views, opinions or perspectives, rendering them voiceless to their own cause. While tonally a significant size of the coverage about RMs is inclusive and non-hostile toward them, most news stories and images are about them, not for them – most coverage is neutral, not sympathetic towards them. Almost all news coverage about RMs is reactionary or event-related, rarely stories about them because there are millions of them and deserve coverage regardless of their minority status.

### **Overall conclusion on quality of coverage of religious minorities in Pakistan**

1. There is generally very low interest within the media on coverage of RMs-specific issues, keeping RMs generally off the news radar.
2. There is little or no interest in perspectives of RMs even in news stories and images related to them, keeping RMs generally voiceless and silent to their own cause.
3. Most media coverage of RMs portrays them in a victimhood framework or as a neutral subject requiring no action or follow-up reducing their ability to influence media narratives.
4. Most media coverage of RMs-specific issues is reactionary or event-based reporting with little or no analysis, limiting a rights-based approach to their interests.
5. Whatever little coverage is available about RMs is mostly on print media, which is only a fraction of the media landscape in Pakistan with TV and radio, constituting three-fifths of media, mostly ignoring them.

### **Recommendations on improving the quality of media coverage and profile of religious minorities**

To countenance the challenges to the quantitative and qualitative media coverage of religious minorities and to promote greater media professionalism on the subject, the following actions need to be taken, among others:

1. Raise public awareness about news diversity landscape of Pakistani media and its challenges.
2. Sensitize and train the media on religious pluralisms and more nuanced coverage of religious minorities.

3. Promote interface between representatives of religious minorities and media to improve mutual understanding and to curb their stereotyping.
4. Train journalists and online information practitioners with religious minorities backgrounds on professional approaches to a rights-based civic activism.

This study was conducted by the Institute for Research, Advocacy and Development (IRADA), a registered Pakistan-based civil society organization focusing on social development and promotion of civil liberties, on behalf of and with technical assistance of the International Media Support (IMS).

**Islamabad – October 2018**

## INTRODUCTION

### The purpose of this study

The primary purpose of this study is to provide a baseline assessment on the quantity and quality of coverage of RMs in Pakistani media. The findings and recommendations herein can potentially serve to inform strategy for any subsequent intervention to improve media professionalisms related to the coverage of RMs in Pakistani media. The overall objective of this study, therefore, is to potentially improve capacities of media, including journalists, bloggers and social media actors, to better cover human rights and minority rights-related issues and perspectives. Baseline studies like these can aid the process of capacity development of media and minority media practitioners and enhanced societal understanding of the predicament for RMs.

### Background

#### RMs and overall Pakistani demography in numbers

Pakistan is a Muslim-majority state. According to the national population census conducted in 2017, the total population of the country is 207.68m of which Muslims comprise 96.47% and RMs 3.53%. In the previous census in 1998, Muslims comprised 96.28% and RMs 3.72%. So, there is an overall 0.19% drop in the population of RMs between the two headcounts. In the 2017 census only five categories of RMs were identified to proclaim their faiths and the population of RMs in each category was given as follows:

- Hindus: from 1.61% in 1998 to 1.73% in 2017 (Now total population 3.59m)
- Christians: from 1.59% in 1998 to 1.27% in 2017
- Ahmedis: from 0.22% 1998 to 0.09% in 2017
- Scheduled Castes: from 0.08% in 1998 to 0.07% in 2017
- Other minorities: from 0.07% in 1998 to 0.02% in 2017

It appears that except for Hindus, the overall population of each of the rest of RMs has gone down in percentage terms between the last two census exercises. No reasons are officially recorded for the drop in these numbers. There has been no media investigation of this phenomena. Other than the three specific RMs included for identity in the census columns, RMs in Pakistan also include Sikhs, Bahais, Zoroastrians/Parsis, Kailash and Jews. All these RMs are included in the headcount for 'Other minorities' column in the census form.

## **RM**s and Pakistan's media landscape in numbers

According to unofficial statistics from various representative associations of media sector stakeholders in the country, Pakistan's overall media industry employs close to 250,000 people of which the total number of journalists is around 20,000. Of this, the total number of women journalists is around 850 (or 4.2%) while the number of journalists with **RM** backgrounds are estimated at 270 (or 1.3%). So even in comparison with the overall demographics, the **RM** population in Pakistan is 3.5% while the number of journalists with **RM** background in media is 1.3%, which is only a third of the comparative percentages.

The number of Pakistani TV channels licensed by the Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority by the fall of 2018 was 96 of which current affairs (news) TV channels were 37 (including 14 in vernacular languages); the number of FM radio stations was 143 of which 35 were non-commercial and print media journals accredited to the All Pakistan Newspaper Society included 137 daily newspapers, 13 weeklies, two fortnightlies and 45 monthly magazines. According to unofficial figures on media consumers from the media industry, by the fall of 2018 there were 160m TV viewers, 80m FM radio listeners and seven million print media circulation figures.

## **RM**s and representation in media coverage

Pakistan often fares poorly in international rankings on religious freedoms with even minority sects within the Muslim faith facing discrimination. The country is a constitutionally declared Islamic state with laws discriminating among its citizens on their faith. However, Pakistan has a strong background in public movements on civil and political rights. The development sector is strong on advocacy for equal rights including voicing support for **RM**s. According to anecdotal evidence, the **RM**s in Pakistan often get little or no media coverage and whatever little coverage emerges, it often lacks representative or robust voices of the **RM**s themselves. With an overwhelming number of media practitioners themselves being Muslims, there is little sensitization toward minority voices, opinions and perspectives. This is why a baseline study like this can help sharpen the evidence on the scant nature, scope and scale of the coverage of **RM**s in media.

## METHODOLOGY

Content analysis is a widely recognized analytical method within media studies. Scrutinizing media content to uncover hidden messages, intentions, and motivations has been one of the field's main interests since the 1920s when the method was first introduced by Harold Lasswell to study propaganda<sup>1</sup>. Since then several different tools and approaches have been developed to strengthen the methodology and create transparency regarding coding and conclusions. Typically, a distinction is made between quantitative and qualitative approaches to content analysis. Whereas the quantitative approaches tackle large amounts of data in a systematized way based on predetermined codes, the qualitative approaches look at smaller samples from a more bottom-up perspective. Although more difficult in terms of ensuring scientific reliability, qualitative approaches are generally seen as better suited to scrutinize texts in-depth and form theories on likely interpretations of audiences<sup>2</sup>.

For the purposes of this study, a qualitative approach was selected. As International Media Support (IMS) wanted to better understand how the media in Pakistan covers RMs, it was necessary to look at the content from several different angles and analyze the material in-depth. More specifically, it was decided to analyze the collected media content by looking at the representation of sources and the framing of stories.

## Hypotheses

In view of the above context and rationale, this study used some operative assumptions, or hypotheses, to guide the research. These included:

- **H1:** Media coverage of RMs in Pakistan is generally biased and one-sided
- **H2:** RMs in Pakistani media are generally stigmatized
- **H3:** The voices of RMs are rarely represented in the Pakistani news and media images

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<sup>1</sup> Macnamera, Jim, 2005, "Media content analysis: its uses, benefits and best practice methodology", *Asia Pacific Public Relations Journal* 6(1), p. 1-34.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 5.

To test these hypotheses, the following two research questions were framed for determination through a list of indicators which were measured in the monitoring process and analyzed:

### Research questions

- **RQ1: What characterizes the coverage of RMs in Pakistan?**

The answer to this question will determine the scale of coverage about RMs – the quantum and composition of media that focuses on RMs. This includes examination of which kinds of media report about the RMs the most and which RMs are the most frequently reported about?

- **RQ2: How are RMs represented in the media in Pakistan?**

The answer to this question will determine the distribution of sources being used to cover RMs in Pakistani media. This includes examination of who speaks for RMs in the media? Are the sources reliable, adequate, representative and/or inclusive? Is the media sympathetic or hostile in their portrayals of RMs?

### Method

A regular period of two weeks (October 8-21, 2018) was selected for the study and news stories from different platforms listed in the sampling frame (please see list below) were continuously harvested for later analysis.

A customized coding scheme developed and shared by IMS was used for the analysis with deductive codes for an analysis of sources and a framing analysis. The codes were successfully tested for the first five days as a pilot and proved relevant and useful and were, therefore, used for the duration of the whole monitoring fortnight. The coding was done in a combination of deductive and inductive approaches. Codes were corroborated throughout the analysis before the final conclusions are made and this report written.

### *Sampling scope and scale*

News collection included news coverage from at 12 different media outlets. To ensure as broad a picture as possible, news items were monitored and analyzed from both broadcast media (TV), print media (newspapers), radio and online media. The specific distribution rationale was as follows:

- Broader geographic spread - included representative media establishments in Islamabad, Karachi and Lahore - where four-fifths of Pakistani media density is concentrated;

- A balance of representation between the mainstream and the vernacular media establishments;
- A balance between ideological bent among various media - such as left-leaning, right-wing and centrist;
- All suggested media entities were well-established and recognized – so, mainstream, not marginal.

This represented the pluralisms of Pakistan’s news media landscape – choosing media with the widest reach and impact on the media landscape.

#### *Key sub-themes to ensure a broader sampling for monitoring*

Because generally the quantum of news stories specifically focusing on RMs in Pakistani media is not considered to be significant, the following key sub-themes that also double up as stereotypes and thus generally seen as linking to RMs were also monitored to fill in any thematic gaps in monitoring:

- Blasphemy – Pakistani law proscribe strict punishment for ridiculing the Prophet.
- Sanitary workers – A large quantum of the sanitary workforce Pakistani municipalities belong to members of RMs.
- Slums – In several cities across Pakistan slums are populated by RMs concentrations.
- Bootleggers – Alcohol consumption in Pakistan by Muslims is banned under the law. However, non-Muslims can consume and trade in alcohol.
- Domestic workers – In several large urban communities, many domestic workers belong to RMs communities.
- Forced conversion – In some regions, especially in southern Sindh province, RMs communities, particularly Hindus, are known to face forced conversions – especially girls.

### **Monitoring sample**

Newspapers: Print versions of Islamabad editions – full newspaper editions

- Express Tribune: English, south Pakistan-based, progressive
- The News: English, north-Pakistan dominated, neutral
- Nawa-e-Waqt: Urdu, central Pakistan focused, right-of-center

TV channels: 9pm to 10pm prime time hourly news bulletins only



- Geo TV: Urdu, national outlook, part of widest/largest media group, centrist and pluralist
- ARY TV: Urdu, urban outlook, influential, politically volatile, sensationalist
- Express TV: Urdu, attempts to avoid sensationalism but fluctuating neutrality

Radio stations: Both FM and AM frequencies and local and national audiences

- FM 99: Islamabad-based, Urdu, liberal, oldest private FM station in Pakistan (4-5pm news bulletin)
- FM 103: Lahore-based: left leaning, focusing on both urban and rural issues (5-6pm news bulletin)
- MW Radio Pakistan: National-focused, government-run, centrist (9-10am news bulletin)

Online media: Innovative digital media that are online-only operations

- Lok Sujag ([www.sujag.org](http://www.sujag.org)): News and current affairs-oriented, Punjab outlook, community-focused.
- Hum Sub ([www.humsub.com.pk](http://www.humsub.com.pk)): Opinion-focused, pluralist, national and international audiences, progressive.
- Naya Daur (<https://www.nayadaur.tv>): Intellectually inclined and perspectives-focused, centrist.

## ANALYSIS

### Key characteristics of the analysis and monitoring cycle

The analysis began after the two-week monitoring period was completed and all pre-determined datasheets and framing analysis sheets with information were completed. While the pre-determined coding scheme with its information drives the analysis, the data is also allowed to ‘speak’ on its own, as can be seen from the accumulative data tables below.

The analysis focuses on two different aspects: (i) **Sources** (representation), (ii) **Frames**. In addition to these specific analyses, all stories were coded for background information on media source, date, length, type of story, topic, priority of story and byline.

#### *Framing analysis*

The study’s framing analysis considers what the overall impression a story gives. What is that the journalist, intended or unintended, wanted the reader/listener/viewer to take away from the story? In which light is the story to be interpreted or understood? Framing analysis of news content is typically done in two ways: deductively or inductively.

Deductive framing analysis identifies frames based on a predetermined set of codes or frames whereas inductive framing analysis identifies frames by going through the sample and finding the frames through continuous analysis and corroboration. Often though, the researcher doing the inductive approach will have some hypothesis on the frames based on literature reviews of similar framing studies or knowing about the topic under scrutiny.

#### *Dominant news cycle in the monitoring period*

Prior to data collection, two regular news weeks<sup>3</sup> were selected (October 8-21, 2018), a sampling frame was set and 12 different Pakistani media outlets were identified for scrutiny. Which stories dominated the monitoring week? The monitoring period was dominated by mainly stories related to the leader of the opposition in the National Assembly, Shahbaz Sharif, arrested by the National Accountability Bureau (NAB) and the subsequent success of his Pakistan Muslim

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<sup>3</sup> Meaning weeks with no significant fluctuations such as scheduled elections or large events.

League-N party in bringing him from detention and producing him in a session specially convened for him to help him speak his mind.

In terms of any specific news related to RMs, the long-dormant and controversial case of Asia Bibi, a Christian woman accused and convicted of blasphemy, suddenly emerged from hibernation after her appeal against the conviction was decided although a decision was reserved and not announced. This was the only case with a national-level interest in the subject related to RMs during the fortnight. Another story was the Supreme Court chief justice taking up a suo moto notice of a news story on forced appropriation of the property of some Hindus.

### Significance of selected media outlets

The following is an overview of the media outlets included in the content analysis in the period under monitoring and indicates their relevancy and significance in the country's media landscape and the quantum of their coverage of RMs in the fortnight under review.

**Table 1: Overview of media outlets included in the content analysis**

Name of outlet	Medium / Language	Ownership Alliances	Reach / Significance	Stories matching sampling frame
<b>Print media</b>				
The News	Newspaper (English)	Jang Media Group – legacy media, centrist in ideology, neutral towards RMs	Part of largest media group in Pakistan. Circulation figures unavailable but is considered among largest circulated English newspapers.	13 stories
Express Tribune	Newspaper (English)	Lakhani Group – non-legacy media, centralist in ideology, friendly towards RMs	Circulation figures unavailable but one of the leaders in the limited circulation world of English-language newspapers.	11 stories
Nawa-e-Waqt	Newspaper (Urdu)	Waqt Media Group – legacy media, rightist in ideology, not friendly towards RMs	Among circulation leaders in the wider world of Urdu newspapers – influential in Punjab and central Pakistan.	08 stories

<b>Broadcast media (TV channels)</b>				
Geo TV	TV Channel (Urdu)	Part of Jang Media Group — centrist in ideology, more accommodating of pluralist voices than most TV channels	Part of the largest media group in country. Proclaims and is accepted as most popular news channel in Pakistan. No viewership figures available.	05 stories
ARY TV	TV Channel (Urdu)	ARY Group is a non-media related business group running a few TV channels as well. Not known for its accommodation towards RMs	One of the earliest operational channels, it is one of the most popular and known for its often-shrill stance to progressive narratives. No viewership figures available.	05 stories
Express TV	TV Channel (Urdu)	Lakhani Group — a non-media related business group running TV channels and newspapers. Not known as a supporter of RMs coverage.	Express is another leading Urdu TV channel available through cable like others. Not neutral as a policy but fluctuating quality.	02 stories
<b>Radio media</b>				
FM 99 Islamabad	Radio (Urdu)	A premier private FM radio station run by a professional broadcaster. Progressive and with an urban vibe.	Covers the Islamabad and Rawalpindi regions with a broadcast footprint of over 5m people. Influential and popular.	00 stories
FM 103 Lahore	Radio (Urdu and Punjabi)	A premier private FM radio station that focuses on civic issues and promotes progressive, pluralist and inclusive narratives.	Covers Pakistan's second largest city Lahore with a population of over 10m. Influential and popular.	00 stories
Radio Pakistan (MW)	Radio (Urdu)	State-run radio station that is inclusive but shuns rights-based discourse.	Operates on the back of MW network of the state radio and claims to cover over two-thirds of national territory.	00 stories

Online media				
Lok Sujag	Online	Run by a non-profit NGO, based in Lahore. News and current affairs platform that focuses on community and political issues in the densely populated Punjab heartland	A rare news-oriented approach to community, development, civic and rights issues with plenty of inclusive audience-engagement. Audience figures not available.	03 stories
Hum Sub	Online	Run by a group of progressive intellectuals, opinion focused online platform having pluralistic and progressive approach	One of Pakistan’s most popular websites – operates principally on content contributed by public. Audience figures not available. Influential.	05 stories
Naya Daur	Online	Run by intellectuals and progressives and focuses on informed opinions and perspectives	Widely recognized as a portal for considered and alternative opinions on politics and culture. Audience figures not available.	01 story

## Analysis – basic review of news quantum by media composition

### 1. The most RMs-conscious media in Pakistan

The following is an overview of the data on the quantum of coverage of RMs in the fortnight under review – this includes data on (i) news stories/features, etc., and (ii) news images.

#### 1a. The most RMs-conscious media in Pakistan in terms of news stories

Data Table 2: Overview of the quantum of news stories

Monitoring dates	No. of news stories	Medium			
		Print (newspapers)	Broadcasting (TV channels)	Online	Radio
08-10-2018	03	01	01	01	-
09-10-2018	06	03	01	02	-
10-10-2018	03	02	01	-	-
11-10-2018	01	01	-	-	-
12-10-2018	03	02	01	-	-
13-10-2018	10	09	-	01	-
14-10-2018	05	05	-	-	-

15-10-2018	02	01	01	-	-
16-10-2018	05	01	02	02	-
17-10-2018	05	02	02	01	-
18-10-2018	04	01	03	-	-
19-10-2018	02	01	-	01	-
20-10-2018	01	01	-	-	-
21-10-2018	03	02	-	01	-
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>09</b>	<b>00</b>

**Analysis**

Within the pre-determined media sample, the data from the period under review indicates that a total of **53** news stories matching the pre-determined sampling frame of the study were carried by the media. Of these 32 stories – or 60.3% – were carried by the print media, 12 stories – or 22.6% – were carried by TV media, nine stories – or 16.9% – were carried by the online print media, and not a single story by the radio media.

*1b. The most RMs-conscious media in Pakistan in terms of news images*

**Data Table 3: Overview of the quantum of news images**

Monitoring dates	No. of news stories	Medium			
		Print (newspapers)	Broadcasting (TV channels)	Online	Radio
08-10-2018	02	-	01	01	NA*
09-10-2018	02	-	-	02	NA
10-10-2018	05	04	01	-	NA
11-10-2018	-	-	-	-	NA
12-10-2018	01	01	-	-	NA
13-10-2018	01	01	-	-	NA
14-10-2018	-	-	-	-	NA
15-10-2018	-	-	-	-	NA
16-10-2018	03	-	01	02	NA
17-10-2018	03	01	02	-	NA
18-10-2018	04	01	03	-	NA
19-10-2018	-	-	-	-	NA
20-10-2018	-	-	-	-	NA
21-10-2018	02	02	-	-	
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>08</b>	<b>05</b>	<b>00</b>

\* NA – Not Applicable

### Analysis

Within the pre-determined media sample, the data from the period under review indicates that a total of **23 news images** (pictures published / broadcast along side or independent of news items) matching the pre-determined sampling frame of the study were published or broadcast by the media. Out of these 23 *news images*, 10 or 43.4%, were published in newspapers, eight (34.7%) telecast by TV channels and five (21.7%) published by online media. The sub-indicator of an image did not apply to radio media.

### **Overall key findings – quantum and composition**

- Despite having the lowest audiences among the four types of media monitored, print media carried the most numbers of *news items* related to RMs – almost two in every three news items carried by all media – and emerges as the most RMs-conscious media in Pakistan.
- Despite having the lowest audiences among the four types of media monitored, print media carried the most numbers of *news images* related to RMs – almost two in every four images carried by all media.
- Radio is the least RMs-conscious medium among the various media in Pakistan – it carried not a single RMs-focused news item despite being the medium with the second largest numbers of audiences after TV.
- The chances of news images relating to RMs being published or broadcast is less than half of the quantum of news items coverage of RMs.

## 2. The most frequently focused RMs in Pakistani media

The following is an overview of the data on the most frequently focused RMs in the fortnight under review – this includes data on (i) news stories/features, etc., and (ii) news images.

### 2a. The most frequently focused RMs in Pakistani media’s news stories

**Table 4: Overview of RMs highlighted in news stories**

Minorities	News STORIES (mentioning specific RMs)	Medium			
		Print (newspapers)	Broadcasting (TV channels)	Online	Radio
Hindus	20	12	06	02	-
Christians	14	11	-	03	-
Sikhs	05	02	01	02	-
Ahmedis	01	-	-	01	-
Kailash	02	-	02	-	-
Shia (within Muslim denomination)	01	01	-	-	-
Ismailis	01	-	-	01	-
Others (reference to RMs in general, no specific RMs cited)	09	06	03	00	-
Grand Total	53	32	12	09	-

### Analysis

Within the pre-determined media sample, the data from the period under review indicates that of the total **53 news items** matching the pre-determined sampling frame of the study published or broadcast, the Hindu community was the specific focus in 20 of them (37.7%) of which 12 were carried by print media, followed in second place by Christians in 14 stories (26.4%) of which 11 were carried by print media and Sikhs in third place in five stories (9.4%). The Kailash community was referenced in two news items while the Ahmedi, Ismaili and Shia community in one item each. There were nine news items (16.9%) in which RMs were referenced generally without citing any specific RMs.



2b. The most frequently focused RMs in Pakistani media’s news images

Data Table 5: Overview of RMs highlighted in news images

Minorities	News IMAGES (mentioning specific RMs)	Medium			
		Print (newspapers)	Broadcasting (TV channels)	Online	Radio
Hindus	10	05	05	-	NA
Christians	07	04	-	03	NA
Sikhs	02	-	01	01	NA
Ahmedis	01	-	-	01	NA
Kailash	03	01	02	-	NA
Grand Total	23	10	08	05	NA

Analysis

Within the pre-determined media sample, the data from the period under review indicates that of the total **23 news images** matching the pre-determined sampling frame of the study published or broadcast, the Hindu community was the specific focus in 10 of them (43.4%), followed by Christians in second place with seven images (30.4%) and Kailash in third place with three images (13%). The Sikh community was referenced in two news images while Ahmedis in one.

**Overall key findings – most frequently focused RMs in news and images**

- The Hindu community in Pakistan got the lion’s share in being the specific subject of news stories and news images related to RMs published or telecast in newspapers, TV channels and online media. The Hindu community was twice as likely to figure in a news item and one in every three news images as any other RMs covered by the media in the period under review.
- The Christian community in Pakistan came second among the remaining RMs in terms of being the specific reference in news stories and news images in the period under review.
- The print media carried twice as many news items about Hindus than TV media did while the print media (over two-thirds) and online media (about one-third) reported about Christians – the print media did not.
- The print media and TV media gave equal weightage to Hindus in the number of images and visuals relating to them. The TV media again carried no images of visuals of the Christian community while print and online media gave almost equal weightage to them Christians.

*Other notes related to the specific themes of news images*

Print media images of RMs: Images published by the newspapers includes: images of a meeting between the prime minister and a delegation of the representatives of the Christian community; an image of Punjab provincial cabinet minister, who himself is a Christian, addressing a gathering organized by the Christian community; an image of a sprawling Hindu temple complex; an image showing members of the Hindu community celebrating one of their religious festivals; an image of two young Kailash girls adorned in their famous colorful, traditional attire while participating in a local festival; an image showing several Hindu women performing religious rites at a festival; an image of the cover page of a book, titled 'The History of Lahore,' written by a Hindu writer; and an image showing Muslim protestors holding banners and sticks protesting against the possible acquittal of Asia Bibi, a Christian woman convicted of blasphemy and awaiting an appeal against her conviction.

Broadcast media images of RMs: The images aired by TV channels includes: an image of a member of the Sikh community; a visual of several Kailash women dancing in their traditional attire and celebrating some festival; video shots of the famous Hindu temple Katas Raj; and the picture of a former cricketer belonging to Hindu community.

Online media images of RMs: The images on online platforms included: an image depicting a candle-light vigil in a public space in memory of former Punjab Governor Salman Taseer, a champion of rights of RMs who was murdered for expressing support for a Christian woman charged with blasphemy; an image is of the blasphemy accused Asia Bibi published by two online platforms; an image showing a protest against Ahmedis by Muslims and Christians; and an image of three life size portraits of the Sikh historical figure Maharaja Kapoorthala.

### **3. News coverage of RMs – principal or incidental?**

The following is an overview of the data on the nature of focus on RMs – whether the RMs featured are the principal focus of news items (the news stories are about them) or incidental/indirect (the news stories are not about them specifically) in the fortnight under review – this includes data on news stories/features, etc.

3a. The quantum of news coverage specifically focusing on RMs

Of the news stories monitored related to the coverage of RMs, there emerged two categories of such news items – one where the news items were specifically about RMs generated from an event such as a meeting of an RM community, while the second one was about a general event where the reference of RMs emerged incidentally. The following data and analysis is about the first category (“principal”) of news.

Data Table 6: News stories with principal focus on RMs

Minorities	Principal focus of news story	Medium			
		Print (newspapers)	Broadcasting (TV channels)	Online	Radio
Christians	15	12	-	03	-
Hindus	15	08	06	01	-
Sikhs	03	02	-	01	-
Kailash	02	-	02	-	-
Ahmedis	01	-	-	01	-
Shia	01	01	-	-	-
Ismaili	01	-	-	01	-
Grand Total	38	23	08	07	-

Analysis

Within the pre-determined media sample, the data from the period under review indicates that of the total **53 news items** matching the pre-determined sampling frame of the study published or broadcast, **38 stories** (72% of the total) had a principal focus on specific RMs. The remaining, 15 stories, were NOT about RMs as a thematic subject of news but the reference to RMs appeared because they simply happened to have case studies who were RMs. Examples of ‘principal story focusing on RMs’ and an ‘incidental story that included indirect reference to RMs’ are given below.

Of these, 15 stories (39.4%) focused on the Christian community, including 11 stories (28.9% of total) solely about Aasia Bibi, a Christian woman convicted of blasphemy and awaiting a long-pending decision on her appeal against the conviction. Twelve of these were carried by print media and three by online media – none by TV or radio.

Of the 15 stories (39.4%) out of 38 total stories focused on the Hindu community. Of these eight were carried by print media, six by TV media and one by online media. Four out the 15 stories with a principal focus on Hindus were about Katas Raj, an ancient Hindu temple in Punjab province being the subject of a court attention on its inadequate upkeep, four about a Supreme Court action against encroachment of property owned by Hindus in Sindh province, three stories about the match fixing confession of a former test cricketer who is a Hindu.

*Example of 'principal story focusing on RMs'*

Prime Minister Imran Khan in a meeting with a delegation of bishops from various churches of Pakistan

(<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1822187/1-pm-imran-assures-equal-rights-minorities/>)



Prime Minister Imran Khan in a meeting with a delegation of bishops from various churches of Pakistan (<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1822187/1-pm-imran-assures-equal-rights-minorities/>)

This image clearly reflects the news story's focus on the Christians as RMs wherein Prime Minister Imran Khan met a delegation of bishops to discuss issues faced by the community.

*Example of 'incidental story that included indirect reference to RMs'*

**Visuals in a story about earthquake victims' remembrance - aired on ARY TV on October 08, 2018 – showed two Sikhs among the participants of the event without mentioning about their religion. In the visuals, the Sikhs were instantly recognizable due to their religious turbans that they always don.**

#### **Overall key findings – principal or incidental**

- The Hindu community in Pakistan got the lion's share in being the specific subject of news stories and news images related to RMs published or telecast in newspapers, TV channels and online media. The Hindu community was twice as likely to figure in a news item and one in every three news images as any other RMs covered by the media in the period under review.
- The Christian community in Pakistan came second among the remaining RMs in terms of being the specific reference in news stories and news images in the period under review.
- The print media carried twice as many news items about Hindus than TV media did while the print media (over two-thirds) and online media (about one-third) reported about Christians – the print media did not.
- The print media and TV media gave equal weightage to Hindus in the number of images and visuals relating to them. The TV media again carried no images of visuals of the Christian community while print and online media gave almost equal weightage to them Christians.

#### **Analysis – key overall findings on trends**

Prior to data analysis, coding schemes were developed with deductive codes for 1) analysis of *representation of sources* and 2) analysis of *dominating frames*.

#### **4. Representation of themes and sources in media coverage of RMs in Pakistan**

The following is an overview of the dominant **themes** and **sources** of the media coverage of RMs in the period under review and the sources of the news items.

#### 4a. The dominant themes of media coverage of RMs

Data Table 7: Themes of news stories during monitoring period

Main themes of news items	No. of news items	Specific RMs in the news items	Medium			
			Print (newspapers)	Broadcasting (TV channels)	Online	Radio
Blasphemy	13	Christians	10	-	03	-
Conversion (from non-Muslim faith to Muslim)	01	Thai woman (without reference to her previous religion)	-	01	-	-
Legislation	02	Christians, Hindus, Ahmedis	02	-	-	-
Heritage	07	Hindus, Sikhs	04	02	01	-
Land grabbing / encroachment	05	Hindus, Ahmedis	03	01	01	-
Religious harmony and role of RMs	04	Ismailis	02	-	02	-
Religious festival	02	Kailash, Shias	01	01	-	-

#### Analysis

Out of the 53 stories published or broadcast related to RMs in the period under review, the most frequent theme was **blasphemy** which was dominant in 13 stories (24.5%). In all these stories on focusing on blasphemy, only the Christian community was highlighted. Of these 13 stories on blasphemy the print media carried 10 stories and online media three. TV and radio media did not carry any story related to blasphemy. However, there were two other stories related to RMs with the dominant theme of legislation – the blasphemy law – that highlighted the impact of this law on RMs and made specific mentions of Christians, Hindus and Ahmedis. One of these stories defended the blasphemy law while the other spoke about its perceived misuse.

The second most frequent theme of stories related to RMs was **heritage** of RMs, especially archaeological and cultural. A total of seven stories highlighted these themes but focused on Hindus and Sikhs only. Four of these stories were carried by print, two by TV media and one by online media. Of the seven, six were related to the famous Katas Raj Hindu temple in Punjab while one was about the legacy of the historical Sikh figure of Maharaja Kapoorthala.

The third most frequent theme of media coverage related to RMs was illegal **land grabbing** or encroachment of property owned by RMs. A total of five stories focused on this theme of which three were carried by print media and one each by TV media and online media. Four of these stories were about illegal grabbing of lands belonging to Hindus in Sindh province and one of illegal occupation of land owned by Ahmedis in Punjab province.

Other themes included religious/**interfaith harmony** and religious tolerance (total four stories, all about the Ismailis, two each carried by print and online media) and RMs religious **cultural festivals** (two stories, one each about Kailash and Shias, one each carried by print and TV media).

#### **Overall key findings – themes**

- The issue of blasphemy, especially related to the blasphemy law, is the dominant theme when it comes to the coverage of RMs in Pakistani media. One-fourth of all news stories about RMs are dominated by the blasphemy theme. Other key themes include heritage of RMs and illegal seizure of land belonging to RMs.
- Thematically print media focuses on blasphemy related news stories most – 10 of the 13 stories on blasphemy were covered by print media. TV media and radio media tend to ignore blasphemy related news stories.
- Christians tend to be the most focused RM community in Pakistan when it comes to thematic reporting on minority communities with Hindus second.

#### 4b. The dominant sources of news media coverage of RMs

*Data Table 8: Sources of news stories – content sources*

Sources of information included in news stories	Total number of stories
Government (official) policy sources	09
Military authorities	-
Other local / admin authorities including judiciary	14
Self-media / news agencies (no external sources cited)	12
International organizations	-
Local CSOs	01
Foreign governments	-
Local community (non-RMs)	09
Local community (RMs)	08
Experts (national)	08
Experts (international)	05
Others	-
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>66 (Sources in 53 stories in total)</b>

#### Analysis

In the total 53 stories related to RMs, monitored and gathered during the monitoring period in review, a variety of sources were used for the information and content of the stories. Of these the dominant source that emerged were local administrative authorities such as the judiciary and police, which figured 14 times (26.4%) in the overall number of stories.

The second most frequent types of sources were news organizations themselves – stories brought by the media house or its reporters without citing any external source of information, or reference. There were 12 news stories (22.6%) related to RMs that cited no external source. The third most frequent types of sources were governmental policy sources and non-RMs-related local community sources – which appeared nine times each (16.9% each).

The other miscellaneous but specific sources of information for RMs-related news were local communities related directly to RMs and national subject experts – which appeared eight times each (15% each); international experts (five stories) and local CSOs (one story).



### Overall key findings – news sources

- RMs comprise the one of the least quoted sources of information on news stories related to RMs – in barely 12% of all stories. This means the views, opinions and perspectives of RMs are mostly missing from what little coverage about them happens. RMs are largely silent in media.
- Nearly a third of all sources of information quoted in all the news coverage of RMs are official sources such as local administration or policy circles. This explains why perspectives on rights of RMs are dominated by existing policy positions, which is a vicious cycle.
- The media considers itself an adequate source of information about RMs in almost one-fourth of all news stories. Overall the media largely fails to contact the RMs on coverage about them is, therefore, complicit in keeping the voice of RMs subdued.

## 5. Portrayal of RMs in Pakistani media – stereotypes and marginalization

The following is an overview of how the media coverage of RMs in the period under review portrayed them in terms of how they and their issues were framed by the media itself.

### 5a. The representation of RMs in media coverage

Data Table 9: Representation of RMs in news stories

Representation of RMs in news stories	No. of stories	Medium			
		Print (newspapers)	Broadcasting (TV channels)	Online	Radio
Strong	19	14	-	05	-
Weak	15	02	10	03	-
Nil	19	16	02	01	--
Grand Total	53	32	12	09	

### Analysis

For the purposes of this analysis, here’s a guideline to the categories of representation:

- a. ‘Strong’ – direct representation/first choice of sourcing of RMs in the news story – with their views articulated and asserted

Story published in Daily Express Tribune on October 14, 2018



- b. 'Weak' – passive representation with insufficient sourcing of RMs in the news story

The write up is about the Historian of Lahore city and one of the historians happened to be a Hindu. There is no other reference from RMs. Therefore, it falls under a story having a weak reference to the RMs. Published in The News on Sunday (TNS), a magazine of daily The New, on October 21, 2018 – TNS

### The historian of Lahore

Tahir Kamran October 21, 2018 1 Comment

Kanhaiya Lal - a multi-faceted personality



- c. 'Nil' – No or indirect representation of RMs in the story; incidental references.

This story contains a statement of a local leader of religious (Muslim) party who announced protest for the punishment of a female Christian, who was accused of blasphemy. The story has no representation of RMs. (Published on October 11, 2018, Nawa-i-waqt (Urdu))



Out of the total 53 stories focusing on RMs monitored in the period under review, only 19 stories (35.8%) had relatively 'strong' representation of RMs (with their views articulated and asserted) and 15 (28.3%) had 'weak' representation of RMs (with insufficient representation) while 19 stories (35.8%) had no direct representation of RMs at all (indirect references).

Of these, print media provided the best coverage in relative terms in which RMs were presented as ‘strong’ communities in 14 of the 19 stories with such representation and five online media stories. However, print media was simultaneously responsible for 16 of the 19 stories in which RMs had no direct representation (‘nil’) on news stories about them. TV media was responsible for 10 of the 15 stories in which the RMs were given ‘weak’ representation.

**Overall key findings – representation**

- Nearly two-thirds of all news stories about RMs (34 out of 53) portray them as either ‘weak’ or absent (‘nil’ representation) in stories about themselves. This indicates an insensitivity about the plight of RMs by the media, which considers is generally acceptable to not allow them to articulate their own points of view to offer strong direct perspectives on issues that concern them.
- Print and online media present minorities as either ‘weak’ or ‘absent’ (‘nil’) in about two of every three stories that carry about RMs while TV media is the worst – it rarely carries any story in which RMs are portrayed as ‘strong’ – almost all of the few stories they carry about RMs portrays them as ‘weak’ or ‘absent’.

**5b. Gender diversity of RMs in media coverage**

*Data Table 10: Representation of RMs in gender terms*

Representation of RMs in gender terms	No. of stories	Medium			
		Print (newspapers)	Broadcasting (TV channels)	Online	Radio
Males only	36	22	10	04	-
Females only	06	03	02	01	-
Male + Female	11	07	00	04	-
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>09</b>	-

Analysis

Out of the total 53 news stories focusing on RMs monitored in the period under review, most – 36 stories (67.9%) – carry perspectives of only males. Of these 22 stories were carried by print media, 10 by TV media and four by online media. There were only six stories (11.3%) that carried exclusively female perspectives of which three were carried by print, two by TV media and one by online media. There were 11 stories (20.7%) in which perspectives of both females and males have been incorporated of which seven were by print media and four by online media – none by TV media.

Example 1: ‘Males only’

The story about a Sikh (former) Indian cricketer and politician speaking about the culture of Pakistan, was published by Daily The News on October 14, 2018. The story carries views of only males.



Example 2: ‘Females only’

Image published in Express Tribune on October 18, 2018. The picture shows only Hindu women.



### Example 3: 'Male + Female'

مہاراجہ کچھو تھلہ کو تخت کیسے ملا؟  
نئی دہلی، 16/10/2018ء | 16/10/2018ء | n/a Views



The story, published by <http://www.humsub.com.pk> on October 16, 2018, is about a Sikh Maharaja and role of her wife in bringing him to the throne. The picture shows males and a female.



#### Overall key findings – gender diversity

- Males dominate the narratives about RMs in about two-thirds of news stories and women in just about one in every 10 stories. However, nearly half of all stories about RMs has either exclusive or partial representative of women's voices in them.
- Print media is the least likely of all media in quantum terms to reach out to women for their perspectives, views and opinions on news coverage related to RMs but most likely to do so percentage terms. TV media is inclined towards generally ignoring women's perspectives when it comes to coverage of RMs.

5c. How the media frames RMs in its news coverage

Table 11: Framing of RMs in news stories

Framing of RMs in news stories	Medium			
	Print (newspapers)	Broadcasting (TV channels)	Online	Radio
Frame 1: RMs as a threat <i>(presented as a source of negativity)</i>	1	-	1	-
Frame 2: RMs as victims of discrimination/racism <i>(presented as targets of pity or ridicule)</i>	12	-	3	-
Frame 3: RMs as a diverse group <i>(presented as requiring special treatment)</i>	5	1	1	-
Frame 4: RMs as a resource <i>(presented as reflecting social pluralisms)</i>	5	-	-	-
Frame 5: RMs as a political issue <i>(presented as a hot button issue)</i>	6	-	1	-
Frame 6: RMs as root of the problem with RMs <i>(presented a troublemakers)</i>	-	-	-	-
Frame 7: Neutral representation of RMs <i>(news reports with no position on the plights of RMs)</i>	4	10	3	-
Frame 8: Media meta-frame (coverage on media coverage of RM)	-	-	-	-
Frame 9: Any other....	-	-	-	-
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>-</b>

Analysis

Out of the total 53 news stories focusing on RMs monitored in the period under review, the dominant framing of RMs is one of neutrality – an absence of position on them. In 17 of the 53 news stories (32%), there is stock reporting portrayal – neither as being discriminated against nor as a threat. TV media frames them in neutral terms in 10 of these stories, print media four times and online media three times. The second most dominant framing of RMs is that of being victims of discrimination – in 15 of 53 stories (28.3%) with print media

framing them thus in 12 stories and online media three times. The third most dominant framing of RMs is that of them being either a ‘diverse group’ (requiring special treatment) or as a ‘political issue’ (a hot button issue) – this happens seven times each on both these categories in. Print media frames RMs as diverse five times and TV and online media once each while print media frames RMs as a political/controversial issue six times and online media once. Other key categories RMs are framed in include as a ‘resource’ five times (all by print media) and as a ‘threat’ – twice (once each by print and online media).

Example 1: ‘RMs as victims of discrimination/’



This op-ed was published on October 16, 2018 in Daily The News, portraying RMs as victims of discrimination.

Example 2: ‘RMs as a political issue’

This image along with a story in Urdu, published by the Daily Nawa-i-waqt on October 10, 2018, shows a Provincial Minister Mr. Aijaz Masih, who belongs to Christian community, speaking about system for the protection of rights of minorities.





**Overall key findings – framing**

- RMs in Pakistani media coverage are mostly framed as victims of discrimination – in about one-third of all news stories – or as controversial groups (political or diverse group requiring special treatment) in one-third of all stories.
- Print media is more nuanced when it comes to framing RMs – presenting them in ‘actual’ terms (discriminated against, a political issue, a diverse group and as a resource) in 28 of the 33 stories while generally negative portrayal (as a threat or problem) only once. TV media almost always fails to take a position and mostly portrays them in neutral terms (ordinary stories) in 10 of the 11 stories it has done on RMs.

**5d. How the RMs are portrayed in news images and visuals**

*Data Table 12: Representation of RMs in images and visuals*

Framing of RMs in images	Medium		
	Print (newspapers)	Broadcasting (TV channels)	Online
Frame 1: Religious minorities as a threat	1	-	1
Frame 2: Religious minorities as victims	-	-	-
Frame 3: Neutral representation of religious minorities	9	8	4
Frame 4: No religious minorities present	0	-	0
Frame 9: Any other....	-	-	-
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>08</b>	<b>05</b>

Analysis

Out of the total 23 total images and visuals focusing on RMs monitored in the period under review, all except two – 21 images (91%) – portray a neutral picture of them. Of these, print published most (10) followed by TV media that aired 8 images and four images published by online media. The remaining two images, one each carried by print media and online media, portray RMs as threats.

## Examples of images

### *Neutral representation of RMs*

The image was published in Daily Express Tribune on October 17, 2018, showing two Kalashi girls celebrating their cultural festival



### *Religious minorities as a threat*

The image, published as part of story in <http://www.sujag.org> on October 16, 2018, shows a protest against the resident Ahmedi community by Muslim.



### **Overall key findings – news and visuals**

- Compared to news stories about them, news visuals (photos, video images, etc.) offer a near uniform image of RMs in Pakistani media – they are mostly portrayed in neutral terms, failing to excite feelings about them considering the news media often portrays them as discriminated against.
- Unlike news stories where print media is more likely to focus on RMs than TV media, both these mediums are likely to equally use images about RMs though both in neutral tones.

**5e. The overall tone of media towards RMs**

*Data Table 13: Tone of news stories toward RMs*

Tone of news stories towards RMs	Medium			
	Print (newspapers)	Broadcasting (TV channels)	Online	Radio
Hostile	6	-	-	-
Inclusive	19	-	7	-
Neutral	8	11	2	-
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>09</b>	<b>-</b>

Analysis

Out of the total 53 news stories focusing on RMs monitored in the period under review, a majority were tonally inclusive towards them – 26 stories (49%). Of these 19 stories were carried by print media and seven by online media. Twenty-one stories (39.6%) were tonally neutral of which TV media carried 11, print media eight and online media two. Six stories (11.3%) were tonally hostile towards RMs – all were carried by print media.

**Overall key findings – tone**

- Media coverage of RMs in Pakistan tends to be generally inclusive half of the time but a significant number tends to portray stories related to RMs in neutral terms that takes the edge out of speaking on behalf of communities that a large number of stories portray as being discriminated against.
- While the percentage of media coverage that is hostile towards RMs is small it is worrying that all stories that fall in this category are carried by print media even though print media also tends to be twice as likely to be inclusive towards them in overall terms.

## CONCLUSIONS and RECOMMENDATIONS

The following findings and conclusions are derived from the analysis section but arranged to respond to the two Research Questions this study started out to answer.

### **Research Question 1: What characterizes the coverage of RMs in Pakistan?**

The answer to this research question is embedded in the review of the general quantum of news and images related to RMs and which media carry how much coverage of them; the frequency of various RMs featured in the media coverage and whether the focus on RMs in the coverage is central to it or incidental. The following is a summary set of findings in this analytical framework:

#### *Quantum and composition of RMs*

Despite having the lowest audiences among the four types of media monitored, print media carried the most numbers of news items as well as news images related to RMs and emerges as the most RMs-conscious media in Pakistan. Radio gave no coverage to RMs at all. The chances of news images relating to RMs being published or broadcast is less than half of the quantum of news items coverage of RMs.

#### *Most frequently focused RMs in news and images*

The Hindu community in Pakistan got the lion's share in being the specific subject of media coverage getting twice as much attention in news stories and one in every three news images as any other RMs. The Christian community came second in frequency of coverage. The print media carried twice as many news items about Hindus than TV media did while the print media (over two-thirds) and online media (about one-third) reported about Christians – the print media did not.

#### *RMs in news – principal or incidental?*

Two-thirds of the media coverage about RMs had a principal focus on them, one-third did not. The Hindu community was the most frequently specific focus of this coverage – twice as much as the rest, with Christian community coming second. The print media tended to be the most persistent in keeping RMs the principal focus of coverage about them.

### CONCLUSION of findings on Research Question 1:

The overall media coverage of RMs in quantum terms is generally low and the most widely available media – TV and radio – carry very little or no coverage of them at all. Hindus and Christian communities are the focus of almost all of what little coverage of RMs is available with other minorities such as Ahmedis, Sikhs, Buddhists, Kailash, etc., get almost no coverage. Most coverage of RMs has a principal focus on them but nearly a third don't.

### Research Question 2: How are RMs represented in the media in Pakistan?

The answer to this research question is embedded in the review of the most dominant themes characterizing the coverage of RMs, the news sources used in the coverage, the gender diversity in perspectives to this coverage, the stereotypes and frames in which they were portrayed and the tone of the coverage towards them. The following is a summary set of findings in this analytical framework:

#### *Dominant themes about RMs – key trends*

Findings in this section are essentially reflective of the events in the two weeks of monitoring period only and should not be considered necessarily representative of most full-time reporting in Pakistani media. One key trend observed during the period under review was that the issue of blasphemy highlighted in the news stories that referenced is the dominant theme of the coverage of RMs. Other key themes included heritage of RMs and illegal seizure of land belonging to RMs. In the period under review, thematically print media focuses on blasphemy related news stories most while TV and radio media tended to ignore blasphemy related news. Also in the two-week monitoring period, Christians tended to be the most focused RMs community in Pakistan when it comes to thematic reporting, especially on the issue of blasphemy, with Hindus coming second.

#### *Sources of information for news coverage of RMs*

RMs are largely silent in media – their views, opinions and perspectives are mostly missing from what little coverage about them happens as they comprise one of the least quoted sources of information on media coverage related to them. Nearly a third of all sources of information in media coverage of RMs are official sources such as local administration or policy circles and another one-fourth is media itself.

### *Representative framework of RMs*

Nearly two-thirds of all news stories about RMs portray them as either 'weak' or absent ('nil' representation) in stories about themselves, indicating insensitivity by the media to the need to allow the RMs to speak for themselves. Print and online media mostly frame RMs as 'weak' or 'absent' ('nil') while TV media is the worst – it rarely carries any story in which RMs are portrayed as 'strong.'

### *Gender diversity in coverage about RMs*

Males generally dominate the narratives about RMs but nearly half of all stories about RMs has either exclusive or partial representative of women's voices in them. Print media is the least representative of women's views in quantum terms but paradoxically most likely to do so percentage terms. TV media generally ignores women's perspectives when it comes to coverage of RMs.

### *Framing – stereotyping of RMs*

RMs in Pakistani media coverage are mostly framed as victims of discrimination or as controversial. Print media is more nuanced when it comes to framing RMs – presenting them as either victims, a controversy to be tackled of a diversity issue while TV media almost always fails to take a position and mostly portrays them in neutral terms.

### *News and visual representation of RMs*

Compared to news stories about them, news visuals offer a near uniform image of RMs in Pakistani media – they are mostly portrayed in neutral terms, failing to excite feelings about them considering the news media often portrays them as discriminated against. Unlike news stories where print media is more likely to focus on RMs than TV media, both these mediums are likely to equally use images about RMs though both in neutral tones.

### *Media's tone towards RMs*

Media coverage of RMs in Pakistan tends to be generally inclusive half of the time but a significant number tends to portray stories related to RMs in neutral terms that takes the edge out of speaking on behalf of communities that most news stories portray as being discriminated against. While the percentage of media coverage that is hostile towards RMs is small, all stories tonally hostile are carried by print media even though print media also tends to be twice as likely to be inclusive towards them in overall terms.

### CONCLUSION of findings on Research Question 2:

The overall media coverage of RMs in qualitative terms is generally stereotypical linked to sensitive themes such as blasphemy. The minorities are generally painted in a victimhood framework. Most coverage about them does not even include their views, opinions or perspectives, rendering them voiceless to their own cause. While tonally a significant size of the coverage about RMs is inclusive and non-hostile toward them, most news stories and images are about them, not for them – most coverage is neutral, not sympathetic towards them. Almost all news coverage about RMs is reactionary or event-related, rarely stories about them because there are millions of them and deserve coverage regardless of their minority status.

### RECOMMENDATIONS on improving portrayal of RMs in media coverage

- **Raise public awareness about news diversity landscape of Pakistani media and its challenges**

Conduct a series of public awareness dialogues on the inadequate and generally poor nature and scale of news diversity of views, opinions and perspectives in Pakistani media. These dialogues can be premised on freedom of expression and right to information to highlight the marginalization of RMs from the media. These public dialogues should include media, representative associations of RMs, civil society, political parties and academia.

- **Sensitize and train the media on religious pluralisms more nuanced coverage of RMs**

Conduct a series of discussions within the media industry, especially with media managers, news directors, reporting sections and news desks, on findings of this study and ways to expand coverage of RMs and make that coverage sensitive and representatives of their rights and perspectives. These discussions should be followed up with customized trainings and small-grants for journalists to promote the quantity and quality of coverage about RMs.

- **Promote interface between representatives of RMs and media**

Conduct a series of orientation workshops for representative associations of RMs on effective communications and outreach with the media. This should be followed by interface meetings between representative associations of RMs and key media stakeholders in

improving understanding about rights and needs of RMs in the context of freedom of expression and right to information and addressing the gaps on views, opinions and perspectives of RMs in media narratives.

- **Train journalists and online information practitioners with RM backgrounds**

Conduct a series of trainings for journalists and online information practitioners with RM backgrounds on how to do good public interest journalism and activism while being safe and how to improve the public profile of the overall RMs communities. Facilitate networking among them around professionalism issues.





## About IRADA - A brief profile

The Institute for Research, Advocacy and Development (IRADA) is a registered Pakistan-based civil society organization focusing on social development and promotion of civil liberties with the following vision and mission:

**Vision:** IRADA envisions a democratic, progressive and inclusive polity and society in Pakistan.

**Mission:** IRADA aims to

1. Strengthen democracy *through inclusivity and pluralisms*
2. Strengthen local empowerment *through devolution of powers*
3. Strengthen governance *through accountability and transparency*
4. Strengthen justice *through fundamental rights*

For more details about IRADA and its work, please visit [www.irada.org.pk](http://www.irada.org.pk)