Persecution 16 November 2026 | English article

EU Parliament Condemns Persecution of Christians in Pakistan Nigeria and Sudan

A true story of faith under pressure. Read the first half below, then continue online.

KEY SPIRITUAL TAKEAWAY

"The European Parliament has condemned the persecution of Christians in Pakistan, Nigeria and Sudan in three resolutions adopted last week, calling on governments to protect religious minorities and hold abusers accountable"

(Transliterated from the original Hindi.)

They had gathered only to pray. When prayer itself becomes the target, faith is proved not by words but by staying.

The Story - Part One

The European Parliament has condemned the persecution of Christians in Pakistan, Nigeria and Sudan in three resolutions adopted last week, calling on governments to protect religious minorities and hold abusers accountable. The Pakistan resolution put a single name at its centre: Maria Shahbaz, a 13-year-old Christian girl from Lahore who was abducted in July 2025, forcibly converted to Islam and married to her alleged abductor - a marriage Pakistan's Federal Constitutional Court upheld in March 2026.

Maria was 13 years old. She was taken from near her home in Lahore on 29 July 2025 by a 30-year-old man, Shehryar Ahmad, according to Human Rights Focus Pakistan. She was later presented before a magistrate, where a statement was recorded claiming she had voluntarily converted and married him. The court accepted documents that said she was 18. Her family says those documents were falsified, and her real age was 13.

Her father went to court to get his daughter back. In March 2026, Pakistan's Federal Constitutional Court denied his pleas, upheld the validity of the conversion and the marriage, and ordered Maria to return to the man she had allegedly been forced to marry. The court concluded she had converted and married voluntarily. She remains in his custody while her family continues to pursue legal appeals, according to Human Rights Focus Pakistan.

That is why the European Parliament named her. In its resolution of 9 July 2026, the Parliament called Maria's case emblematic of the wider abuse faced by religious minorities in Pakistan, and urged the Pakistani authorities to ensure she has access to legal representation, regular contact with her family and psychological support. The resolution also called on Pakistan to establish a national mechanism to receive and investigate complaints from families of girls who have been abducted or forcibly converted.

The Turning Point - What Happens Next

The story reaches a life-changing moment that changes everything -- and what seemed like the end is only the middle. Two reports disagree on the numbers, and one question is left unanswered: will the CCTV footage ever come out? Read the full story to find out what happens next.

PERSONAL REFLECTION & DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. When gathering to pray carries a real cost, what keeps a community coming together anyway -- and what would keep you coming?

2. The pastor's sister shielded him with her own body and fainted under the blows. What does costly, self-giving love look like in your own family or church?

3. When justice is delayed and a complaint is withdrawn under threat, how do believers hold on to truth without giving in to fear -- or to hatred?

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