

PERSECUTION IN PAKISTAN

BRIGHT HOPE NEWS



On August 16, 2023, a Christian family residing in Jaranwala, near Faisalabad, was accused of blasphemy, sparking tensions within the community. In response to the allegations, a group of Muslim men initiated an attack on the local churches and Christian homes. The attack escalated quickly, leading to widespread chaos and property damage. Around 400 families were affected, causing destruction to houses and churches and forcing hundreds of individuals to abandon their homes.

As a result of the rioting, many houses and churches in the vicinity were burnt or severely damaged. This destruction of property left families homeless, struggling to find shelter and without basic necessities. Many had to seek refuge with friends, relatives, or in makeshift shelters. Some Christians were also robbed of cash and expensive items.

Our partners in Pakistan were able to respond quickly and contact those in the community affected by the rioting. They visited the area and assessed the extent of the damage and the immediate needs of the families. In follow up visits, they have been able to provide food relief, medical supplies, home appliances and furniture. Bright Hope World has previously worked in this area, providing sponsorship for sewing courses and Bible training. Our local partners have strong relationships with the church leaders and the Christian community in Jaranwala and will continue to support them as they recover from this tragedy.

For Christians in Pakistan, persecution for their faith is a reality. Pakistan's controversial blasphemy laws are frequently abused to target Christians and other religious minorities. Allegations of blasphemy can lead to imprisonment or even death sentences, with little to no evidence required. This puts the Christian community in a constant state of fear.

Beyond the legal and physical threats, Pakistani Christians face societal discrimination that limits their access to education, jobs, and social opportunities. They are relegated to low-paying jobs and treated as second-class citizens. Many Pakistani Christians live in impoverished conditions. Discrimination in the workplace often leads to economic hardships for Christian families who cannot get well-paying jobs.

Christians are underrepresented in Pakistan's political landscape and have limited influence in shaping policies that affect their community. This lack of political power leaves them vulnerable to persecution.

The attack on the churches and the subsequent displacement of families in this tragic event highlights the fragility of religious relations in Pakistan. Ongoing assistance and support are required to address the needs of the affected families and work towards rebuilding a harmonious community.

Michael Hanson
Pakistan, Afghanistan & Indonesia Partnership Facilitator

It has been a real treat to be able to visit Bright Hope World donors and supporters around the country as we have undertaken our Global Impact Update seminars over August and September.

In Auckland, Tauranga, Nelson and Christchurch we have had the opportunity to talk about what we see in the world around us now that we are in the 'post-COVID' era and shared some of the ongoing challenges that our partners face, including rampant inflation and a rise in persecution.

We have also had the opportunity to talk about some of the really positive stuff, including the ongoing – and rising – impact of Foundations for Farming, the huge upswing in the impact of Disciple-Making Movements, and our growing emphasis on equipping our partners to generate revenue in their own local environments.

Our Events page, at brighthopeworld.com/events.asp shows the presentations that we did at each event if you are curious about the five big trends we are seeing.

Thanks to all those that came along and for the encouragement and support from all of you that pray for us and our partners.



Elisha is the first male beneficiary of the loan programme and has had a difficult past. He had been growing rice on someone else's land, but his crop failed, and he lost UGX 7M (US\$2,000) which is a huge amount of money. Elisha moved back to Mbale with his family and obtained basic employment in the Bugere market on the outskirts of the city. However, his employer mistreated and subsequently fired him. He was being paid UGX 3,000 a day (US\$1) and still had a family to support. His wife is a teacher, but teachers do not always get paid on time, if at all.

Elisha moved to another market in 2021 and started a business making chapatis and samosas. The business has grown hugely, and he now employs 17 young people full-time in the business. The young people Elisha employs were vulnerable or troubled street people. In addition, he provides financial support for a number of disabled people. The business is called Kuzukira Snacks. Kuzukira means "resurrection" and Elisha feels that his life has been resurrected and is now for service to other people. He sells his chapatis and samosas not just in the marketplace but to local schools, hospitals, police, and the university. Many of the young people are his "salesmen" and out every day travelling to customers.

Elisha is very enthusiastic about his mentoring role for young people and has a great relationship with them. His first employee was Maureen Johnson. She is a young mother and had a very challenging background during which she had suffered both mental illness and demonic activity. In a very matter of fact way, she describes how the devil had stolen her memory. She has now regained her memory, is articulate, works for Elisha, and is also active in a local church. One of the other young people had been rejected by his family and had tried to take his own life. He is now employed, earning money, and enthusiastic about what he does.

This is such a great outcome from what was a modest amount of money advanced to Elisha as a loan. His initial loan was UGX 300,000 (US\$80) and he currently has a second loan of UGX 800,000 (US\$215).

Read more at <https://www.brighthopeworld.com/partnerships.asp?pid=157>.

1. Please pray for those in Pakistan affected by the rioting and vandalism. Christians make up around 2% of the population and occupy one of the lowest rungs in Pakistani society. Extremist Muslims target Christians, causing damage to property and people.
2. Pray for those affected that they would be safe and resilient during times of persecution.
3. Pray for the Christian witness in Pakistan. As a Muslim country, religious minorities, including Christians, suffer for their beliefs.
4. Pray for Elisha, his employees, and all the other loan beneficiaries in Mbale. Also pray for Anna Ocen, our partner who oversees this loan programme.
5. Praise for successful Global Impact Updates around the country and for a joyful and encouraging opportunity to catch up with our supporters.

