

# ANNUAL REPORT



## 2023



### PEACE CENTER, LAHORE

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*1: Message from Fr. James Channan OP*

*Director, Peace Center*

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I am very pleased to present you Annual Report of Peace Center for the year 2023. Several programs were arranged at Peace Center as planned. These include Christian-Muslim and interfaith dialogue programs, conferences and seminars. These activities were arranged to promote culture of peace, harmony and justice as well as freedom of religion and expression. We organized programs for the Christian youth and families on Christians Faith Formation. In our programs over 1,000 persons; men, women, youth, religious scholars, doctors, lawyers, college and university very actively participated.

In our programs we also discussed the issues of forced conversions and marriages, and problems faced by the minorities and how to assure better status of minorities in Pakistan and work of equal citizenship. There was very tragic incident of Jaranwala which took place on 16th of August, 2023 which resulted in the burning of 26 Churches and destruction of 85 houses of Christians. Our Peace Center administration took very active part to console the Christians of this areas and also offered humanitarian aid to the suffering families as well as participated in interfaith Conferences on this issue of Jaranwala.

Myself, as Director of Peace Center, participated in several national and international conferences as well as Summit on International Religious Freedom in the United States and also participated in the National Prayer Breakfast in Washington DC, in which President of USA, Joe Biden along with King Abdullah II of Jordan his wife Queen Raina were present. The focus of this National Prayer Breakfast was Lord Jesus Christ – the Prince of Peace.

I express my heartfelt gratitude to the donors and partners of Peace Center; MISSIO and Aid to the Church in Need (ACN) who made all these activities a reality. God bless them! Please enjoy reading our annual report. Thanks!

## INTRODUCTION:

**Peace Center** is a project of the Dominican Order, Ibn-e-Mariam, Vice Province, Pakistan. It was inaugurated & blessed by His Eminence, Cardinal Jean-Louis Tauran, President, Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue, Vatican, on 28th of November, 2010. It was a dream which became a reality to have a place for dialogue among various religions, especially Muslims and Christians. At the blessing ceremony the entire Catholic and Church of Pakistan (Protestant) leadership along with Muslim, Hindu, Sikh and Baha'i religious leaders were present to witness this event.



## AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

1. To build bridges of trust, acceptance, respect and demolish the walls of hatred and mistrust among people of various religions, especially Christians and Muslims.
2. To provide a forum where Muslims and Christians and believers of other religions come together under one roof and share their problems and challenges and seek their possible solutions for betterment of humanity, especially religious minorities.
3. To discuss and concentrate on those things which unite us rather than which divide us.
4. To work jointly for the betterment of our society and thus create an atmosphere of respect, tolerance and acceptance of each other and our society.
5. To publish articles, books and annual "Peace: A Theological Journal".
6. To regularly update our website [www.peacecenter.org.pk](http://www.peacecenter.org.pk)
7. To establish contacts with national and international organizations who are working for interfaith harmony, peace and equal citizenship and religious freedom.

## ACTIVITIES:

### **International Interfaith Peace Conference in Islamabad President of Pakistan was the Chief Guest**

At the initiative of the Grand Imam of the Badshahi Mosque in Lahore, Maulana Abdul Khabir Azad, International Interfaith Peace Conference was organized at the local hotel in Islamabad on 25<sup>th</sup> of January, 2023.



His Excellency, Dr. Arif Alvi, President of Pakistan was the Chief Guest, Dr. Andrea Riccardi was the Guest of Honor, whereas there were over 300 guests, including Ambassadors of different countries, human rights activists and promoters of interfaith harmony and representatives of Islam, Christianity, Hinduism, Sikhism and Bahai's, Civil and religious authorities.

His Grace, Archbishop Christophe Z. El-Kassis, Apostolic Nuncio and Archbishop Joseph Arshad also graced this conference with their presence. Fr James Channan OP, represented Peace Center.

Addressing the International Interfaith Peace Conference, President Dr. Arif Alvi called upon everyone to practice one's own religion without interfering in other's religions, ensuring political, social, cultural, legal and religious freedoms for the followers of all religions, respecting and protecting their places of worship and allowing followers of all religions to pray freely in their worship places.

President Alvi said that all the religions of the world preach peace, security and harmony in society but unfortunately, followers of different religions forget and neglect these teachings and resort to war based on vested interests, nationalism, racism, land, resources or politics.

The President of Pakistan said that it was the duty of the Islamic society to protect the religious places of other religions, provide security and respect to their religious leaders and give equal rights to them under the law. He added that Muslim societies are responsible to protect the honor, dignity, life and properties of followers of all other religions.



The President condemned the abhorrent act of burning and desecration of the Holy Quran in Sweden and urged upon international community to take notice of this heinous and abhorrent act and take all necessary measures to provide justice and put in place a mechanism to prevent

rehappening of such shocking acts in future. He added that hate speech, speech inciting violence, promoting racism and bigotry should be curbed and discouraged at all forums. Prof Dr Andrea Riccardi, Founder of Sant' Egidio while addressing the conference highly appreciated Pakistan's hosting of the Afghan refugees. He said that dialogue among communities were essential for promoting peace and harmony, adding that different religions needed to coexist peacefully. He said that minorities had a right to their identity as it strengthened the foundations of a nation. He said that dialogue should be promoted at all levels of society and different religions should compete on promoting good and the welfare of humanity. He said that war was the mother of poverty, and religions could help reduce wars, conflicts, and hatred in the world.



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Fr James Channan OP, Director of Peace Center, Lahore emphasized the grave need of dialogue among religions, cultures and civilizations. Interfaith dialogue is the key to world peace and without it there is no future of the world. He expressed his gratitude to His Holiness Pope Francis and the Grand Imam of Al-Azhar, Ahmed Al-Tayyeb for signing world famous document “Human Fraternity” which needs to be studied and acted upon by religious leaders and scholars. This document is signed in the light of the present issues the world is faced with and the followers of religions can bring lasting peace and justice in the world. He also praised Maulana Abdul Khabir Azad and Community of Sant' Egidio for organizing this international conference. He urged the government of Pakistan to include chapter on interfaith dialogue and peace in the school curriculum so that student open their vision and have positive attitude towards believers of all religion. Fr James Channan lamented the desecration and burning of the Quran in Sweden and demanded the government of Sweden to bring the culprit to justice as he has caused pain and anger among the Muslims around the globe. He expressed his solidarity with Muslims.



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Maulana Abdul Khabir Azad on the occasion called for establishing international laws preventing hate speech. He said that the world had become a global village and people with different views needed to learn to live together peacefully. He said that Pakistan had been a flag-bearer of love, tolerance, hospitality, and had fought against terrorism and religious extremism. He said that Pakistani religious scholars had issued a unanimous religious decree against suicide attacks, terrorism and extremism.

## International Summit on Religious Freedom 2023 in USA

Fr James Channan, Director, Peace Center, was invited for the Summit of International Religious Freedom (IRF) in Washington DC on 30-31 January, 2023. He was invited as special guest at the Summit in Washington DC by the International Religious Freedom (IRF) and with it he was also invited at the National Prayer Breakfast on 2<sup>nd</sup> of February, 2023 in which President of America, Mr. Joe Biden, King of Jordan, King Abdullah, Queen of Jordan, Rania Abdullah, Foreign Minister of Pakistan, Mr. Bilawal Zardari Bhutto, Foreign Minister of Pakistan were among the most respected dignitaries. Several other Ambassadors and dignitaries also participated, all speakers emphasized grave need of peace in the world and gave several references from the Holy Bible on peace and preached by our Lord Jesus Christ - the Prince of Peace and his teaching of compassion, solidarity and helping the poor and needy. It was a great honor for Fr James Channan OP as he was also among the Guests of Honor at this prestigious National Prayer Breakfast USA. His Majesty King Abdullah II, King of Jordan Her Majesty Queen Rania also participated in this event.



During this time, friends, and leaders from more than 100 nations offered prayers for our leaders of the United States as well as leaders and people around the world. The intention of this gathering is to build and strengthen personal relationships and deepen international ties through our love of God and care for each other.

The IRF Summit is an annual civil society conference that seeks to create a coalition of organizations to work together to advance international religious freedom, raise public awareness about religious freedom issues, and increase the political strength of the IRF movement. This year's IRF Summit coincided with the National Prayer Breakfast highlighted four distinctive tracks: defending, documenting, developing, and denying. They focused on the legal, justice, and accountability aspects of freedom of religion and belief; the documenting track highlighted the importance of journalism. With it they highlighted victims who have been persecuted on the basis of their religion or belief.



## Meeting with Bishop Yousaf Sohan, newly appointed Bishop of Multan and Chairman of the National Catholic Commission for Inter-Religious Dialogue and Ecumenism Pakistan



Fr. James Channan OP and staff of Peace Center, Mr. Asher Nazir and Ms. Neelam Nisari had a meeting with Bishop Yousaf Sohan, new Bishop of Multan as well as on his new appointment as Chairman of the National Commission for Inter-Religious Dialogue and Ecumenism Pakistan and with Mr. Samuel Clement for being appointed as new National Executive Secretary of this commission.

His Holiness, Pope Francis was appointed on 9<sup>th</sup> December, 2022 to Fr. Yousaf Sohan as new Bishop of Multan Diocese Pakistan.

Fr James Channan briefed the new Bishop about the activities of the Peace Center and also shared about his work with the Catholic Bishops Commission for Interfaith Dialogue as Executive Secretary for 17 years. Bishop John Joseph, Cardinal Joseph Coutts, Bishop Andrew Francis and Archbishop Sebastian Shaw were the Chairmen of this commission and Bishop Yousaf Sohan succeeded them. Fr James wished him all the best as well to the newly appointed Executive Secretary of the Commission, Mr. Samuel Clement. Sharing was also done about the national and international conferences, seminars and summits as well. Bishop Yousaf Sohan thanked Fr. James Channan OP for his love and with it he thanked Mr. Asher Nazir and Madam Neelum Nisari and he prayed for the staff of Peace Center Lahore. He said that for the promotion of Peace and Interfaith harmony we will work together and we will play an effective role for the better understanding among the people of different religions in Pakistan.

## Paying tribute to late Bishop John Joseph at his 25<sup>th</sup> death anniversary



Archbishop Sebastian Shaw, Fr. Pascal Paulus OP, Fr. James Channan OP and Fr. Ishfaq OFM at the memorial seminar

Human rights activists in Pakistan joined Church leaders on 3 May, 2023 in paying tribute to Bishop John Joseph of Faisalabad at the 25th death anniversary. Regretfully he took his own life at the controversial blasphemy laws in Pakistan. Bishops Shaw said that “We never glorify his final step. We are committed to carrying forward his legacy for the respect of human dignity, basic rights and religious diversity. His movement against the discriminatory law continues,”

also shared about his work and experience with Bishops John Joseph to promote human rights, social justice and interfaith dialogue. Bishop John Joseph was the first Punjabi Pakistani priest.

**Fr. James Channan OP** shared that the civil society and Christian community observed May 6 as a day of remembrance of his self-sacrifice. He was the first Punjabi Catholic priest and the first Punjabi Bishop of the Diocese of Faisalabad, who took his life in protest in front of the Sahiwal court after it passed the death sentence for a young man Ayub Masih. He helped to deter the judicial execution of those charged with blasphemy. Today we eulogize the efforts of The Bishop John Joseph towards eradicating religious intolerance in the country, which has unfortunately only grown to date. Government of Pakistan should introduce preventive legislation to criminalize forced faith conversions to bring perpetrators to justice for their crimes involving child marriage, forced conversion, and sexual violence against minority girls and women. Sporadic sectarian violence and organized crimes involving hate and bloodshed, particularly of minority sects and religions, caused immense suffering, migration, loss of life and loss of reputation in the country.

“In Pakistan many Muslims were killed on blasphemy charge/ where the intention was to get hold of their property,” he said. **Fr. Emmanuel Asi** said “Many local Christians still don’t agree with the suicide,”

**Father Khalid Rashid Asi**, director of the Diocesan Commission for Harmony and Interfaith Dialogue in the Faisalabad diocese, which encompasses Sahiwal, will launch another book on the late bishop in a seminar scheduled this weekend at the Bishop’s House. “It is due to public martyrdom that we are able to convince Muslims about the misuse of the blasphemy laws,” he said. In Faisalabad, Bishop Indrias Rehmat held a memorial service for his predecessor at the St. Peter and Paul Cathedral.

**Peter Jacob**, said the bishop “tried everything humanly possible before sacrificing himself.” We cannot disregard his services because of his final act of killing himself.

“The government should create an atmosphere conducive to discuss the repealing blasphemy laws or at least amend these laws in compliance with the requirements of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights,” Jacob said. The center for social justice had organized

a new program to remember Bishop's sacrifice at the Flatties hotel Lahore, and a number of people from all walks of life attended the event. With its Nabila F Bhatti, Ahmar Rahman, Saroop Ijaz, Bishop Irfan Jamil, Tanveer Jahan, Dr. Kalyan Singh, Saif ul Malook lawyer of Asia Bibi all shed light on the work Bishop Joseph did in his life for Christians and Muslims without the distinction of religion.

### **Rich Tribute paid to Justice Alvin Robert Cornelius, A Catholic Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Pakistan**

Implementation Minority Rights Forum (IMRF) organized a conference to pay tribute to the former Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Pakistan Justice Mr. Alvin Robert Cornelius on 7<sup>th</sup> May, 2023 at a local hotel in Lahore. Justice Umar Ata Bandial Chief Justice Supreme Court of Pakistan participated as Chief Guest in this conference. Tassaduq Hussain Jilani Former Chief Justice, Bishop Azad Marshall, Fr. James Channan OP, Rev. Majid Abel, Mr. Samuel Payara were guests of honor in this this conference. On this occasion, **Chief Justice Bandial paid rich tribute to Justice A. R. Cornelius**, who served as the Chief Justice of Pakistan from 1960 to 1968. He said Justice Cornelius gave 17 years to the Supreme Court and his life was an example for the judges because when he retired, he had no assets in the country. Recalling some of Justice Cornelius' famous decisions, Justice Bandial said the late judge declared the governor general's dissolution of the assembly as illegal, arguing that the executive officer could not decide the fundamental rights. Similarly, when two provinces banned Jamaat-i-Islami in 1964, Justice Cornelius lifted the ban, saying it was a matter of basic human rights and justice. Justice Bandial told participants that the Constitution assured freedom to profess religion and manage religious institutions subject to public order and morality. "Our Constitution in Article 21 safeguards against the taxation of any particular religion. There is no particular reason that other religions be taxed," he said. "Article 22 safeguards educational institutions in respect of religion. No religious instruction or ceremony in any educational institution other than one's own religion."



**Fr James Channan OP** shared that it is really wonderful that our Catholic Chief Justice has played a great role in the judiciary of Pakistan and that he is known to be a very honest judge and that he did not buy any property in Pakistan and lived a very simple life and stayed in the same hotel where this conference is being organized. He was paying charges for the hotel room he was staying in along with his wife till his last breath. The entire Christians community is very proud of him. All judges and lawyers of Pakistan also have great regard for him. **Bishop Dr. Azad Marshall**, Moderator Bishop of Church of Pakistan, said justice and freedom of religion or belief are closely correlated, as both are essential components of a free and democratic society. We are very proud of Justice Cornelius as he is well known for the historic decisions which he made as Chief Justice and they are seen as references.

## Interfaith Conference on the Protection of Minority Rights in Pakistan



One day interfaith conference was organized on 19<sup>th</sup> of June 2023 at Peace Center on the topic of “Implementation of the Landmark Judgement of the Supreme Court of Pakistan PLDSC 699, 19 June 2014 “Protection for the Rights of Minorities in Pakistan”. For this conference there was special collaboration of IMRF (Implementation of Minorities Rights Forum) with Peace Center. This conference was a marvelous manifestation of interfaith harmony and peace and that how all of us, although we belong to different religions can bring a significant change in our society in which rights of all are protected.

Such events in which Muslims, Christians, Hindus and Sikh gather to discuss about their everyday life issues give encouragement to the all, especially to minority communities. It was a very successful and marvelous conference in which everyone felt at home and learnt a lot for the speakers.

Fr James Channan OP, Director of Peace Center, who was the main organizer invited religious leaders, civil society representatives, lawyers, media personals and defenders and promoters of minority rights. He said, “I warmly welcome all the esteemed guests to join this very important conference to protect the minority rights under the light of landmark judgement given by Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Pakistan, Justice Tassaduq Hussain Jilani and his bench of three judges on 19<sup>th</sup> of June, 2014. It was the 9<sup>th</sup> anniversary of this landmark judgment. This conference is the need of hour to raise the voice against the terrorist attacks on All Saints Church in Peshawar in which 126 Christians were martyred and attacks on other Churches, Mosques and Temples as well. Unfortunately, we lost 126 Christians in the blast of All Saints Church in Peshawar as well in war against terrorism Pakistan lost more than 80,000 lives and it is still going on. Some minority community girls were abducted, raped and forced to be married and converted to Islam. Kalash and Ismaili Communities are also facing religion conversion issues. Sadly, saying that, all the minority communities have the reservations but I

would like to appreciate each one of you because your presence is the proof that you have heart for the victims of these communities.

Prof. Dr. Sardar Kalyan Singh appreciated the efforts of the organizers and for the opportunity to share his remarks on this auspicious event. He regretted by saying that we are not equal citizens of Pakistan and according to the Constitution of Pakistan, we are not eligible to become President, Prime Minister, Chief of Army Staff and Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Pakistan and there are many more positions as well we are not eligible for just because we are not Muslims. We are proud to be Pakistanis but somehow the equality of all citizens is missing.



**Syed Mufti Ashiq Hussain** thanked the host for inviting him, and he appreciated the courage and concerns to provide protection to the minority community in Pakistan and according to the history of Islam in Madina State, all the residing minority are protected in Pakistan. All minorities are availing liberty as well. They are free for the celebration of all rituals and enjoying the other rights as well. He appreciated the efforts of Peace Center to work for equal citizenship and harmony.

**Advocate Ms. Nadia Hameed** shared her practical thoughts to condemn all the prejudiced practices against the minorities in Pakistan. We do observe many cases of abduction, forced marriages and conversions of the religion and how painful life that Hindu and Christian girls



have had afterwards. I appreciate if we can only focus on the welfare of Pakistan by protecting the minority rights. I respectfully congratulate to all the stakeholders who have contributed a lot to implement the landmark judgement. Meanwhile, I give recommendation to sign a resolution after this conference for the protection of all minorities. She thanked the Director of Peace Center for organizing this wonderful and successful conference.

Fr. James Channan OP awarded a Pakistan Peace Award to Mr. Samuel Payara on his outstanding efforts to

implement the landmark judgement approximately 80 per cent and continue to protect the minority rights in Pakistan.

On receiving the Pakistan Peace Award, Mr. Samuel Payara thanked Fr. James Channan OP for the concerned appreciation, encouragement and support to create a difference for defending

the minority rights. Furthermore, he shared that “The landmark judgement was the great achievement to safe guard the rights of minorities.

**Advocate Ishtiaq Chaudhary** thanked Fr James Channan for inviting him at this grand conference. He highlighted some of the points of this historic judgement regarding the implementation of the judgement. Peshawar blast was a sad incident but Supreme Court compensated the victim families and also notified to protect the religious places by providing them more security. All the minorities; Christians, Hindus and Sikhs they will register their marriages in NADRA data base. Article 20 of the Constitution of Pakistan.

Ensures the religious freedom of all and propagation of their faith and right freely practice their religions. This religious freedom was also included and passed in 23 March 1940 Resolution of Pakistan. All rights of minorities are protected in the articles number 37, 51, 59, 106 and 224 of the Constitution of Pakistan. Pakistan is signatory with United Nations and bound to implement the 17 SDGs.

**Advocate Kashif Namat** head of the legal team IMRF, and he said that my father was killed in *Youhanabad* blast in 2015 but after this judgment, we have security to protect our Churches and other religious places. I will request to all the religious leaders to propagate the awareness of the judgement that may people enjoy their rights given by the Supreme Court.

Towards the end of this interfaith consultation meeting Fr. James Channan OP thanked all the participants of this historic conference. He said, “I met to the great man Justice Tassaduq Hussain Jilani on 7 May 2023, and paid tribute for the landmark judgment he had given for the betterment of minorities in Pakistan.

### **Mr. Paolo Pozzo President ISCOS for Asia Region visited Peace Center**

Member board of directors National ISCOS and President ISCOS Asia region, Mr. Paolo Pozzo 's visit to #pakistan was fueled by a mission to build bridges and create lasting impact!

In the spirit of fostering understanding and collaboration, Mr. Paolo engaged in discussions with various organizations such as the Ministry of Interfaith Harmony, Peace Center Lahore Pakistan, Don Bosco Technical and Youth Center Lahore, and



more in Pakistan to deepen our connections and explore opportunities for positive change.

Mr. Asher Nazir warmly welcomed with beautiful flowers to Mr. Paolo Pozzo in Peace Center Lahore. He shared the aims, objectives and activities of Peace Center through multimedia presentation. A special focus was on understanding and addressing the challenges faced by the Christian minority in Pakistan. Through an in-depth analysis, we aim to pave the way for tailored interventions in areas like technical #education, #health, and #interfaith harmony ISCOS Pakistan.

### **Celebration of National Minority Day, 2023**

The Centre for Social Justice (CSJ) and Peace Center Peace Center Lahore organized 7th convention on National Minorities' Day, in Lahore, emphasizing the importance of political parties fulfilling their commitments to minorities' rights as outlined in their manifestos. The convention aimed to emphasize Pakistan's commitment to religious freedom, tolerance, and equal rights, echoing Quaid-e-Azam's vision for a progressive and inclusive nation. Center for Social Justice and Peace Center Lahore organized National Minorities Convention on 10 August, 2023 at Faletti Hotel Lahore with the collaboration of AWARD, AWAM, CLASS, Christian True Spirit CTS, Youth Development Organization and Human Rights Focus. More than 150 participants were present included interfaith leaders, representatives of civil societies, lawyer, teachers, political leaders, Government officials and print and electronic media. Mr. Asher Nazir participated as Executive Secretary Peace Center Lahore in this national event with the title of National Minority Day, 2023.



Hina Jillani, Peter Jacob, Wajahat Masood, Benazir Shah, Saqib Jillani, Veengas, Dr. Kalyan Singh Kalyan, Yaqoob Khan Bangash and Suneel Malik were among the speakers. Whereas, Barrister Aamir Hassan (PPP), Ishtiaq Gohar (PML-Q) and Azhar Iqbal (JI) presented their parties' policies regarding minorities' rights.

## **The National Minority Day, 2023 organized by Provincial Secretariat of Social Welfare and Bait-ul-Maal Punjab**

Mr. Asher Nazir, Executive Secretary, Peace Center Lahore received Ambassador of Peace Award, 2023 from Social Welfare Department Government of Punjab, Pakistan

On 11 August, 2023 in the Secretariat of Social Welfare and Bait -ul- Maal Punjab organized National Minority Day, 2023 people of different religions and across the country with highlight their religious and economic rights.

Maulana Abdul Khabir Azad Imam of Badshahi Mosque of was the chief guest of the the department of Social Punjab.



with the in Lahore the aim to socio-

grand Lahore event by Welfare

The declaration to mark National Minorities Day was adopted as part of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights to help and secure those belonging to religious, linguistic, national or ethnic minority groups. Pakistan being the Islamic state and its Constitution guarantees the rights of minorities as white colour in our flag also represents the minorities. The purpose of observing the Day is to highlight the message of Father of the Nation Quaid-e-



Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah, who had pronounced equal rights to all citizens of Pakistan. The Government of Pakistan declared 11 August as the National Minority Day in 2009. It has always been the endeavor of the government to safeguard the fundamental rights, safety, security, honor, life, liberty and prosperity of minorities in line with the historic speech of the founder of the nation Quaid-e-Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah

at the Constituent Assembly on August 11, 1947. Mr. Mudassar Riaz Malik Directorate General Social Welfare & Bait-ul-Mall Director General Social Welfare Government of Punjab shared in his views nonetheless the National Minorities Day not only expresses gratitude for the contributions, made by these religious communities, but also professes that future development of Pakistan hinges crucially on their efforts.

On this occasion, Maulana Abdul Khabir Azad, Archbishop Lahore Sebastian Francis Shaw, Bishop Nadeem Kamran, Sardar Bishan Singh, Pandit Bhagat Lal, Mr. Samuel Payara, Maulana Asim Makhdoom, Mr. Asher Nazir and other religious leaders emphasized the importance of inter-faith harmony and national unity in their heartfelt speeches.

## **26 Churches and 85 houses of Christians attacked and burnt in Jaranwala**

### **Visits paid to the victims and humanitarian aid offered**

This incident of lawlessness, fear and terror happened with Christians in Jaranwala on 16<sup>th</sup> of August in which resulted in the burning of 26 Churches and 85 houses burnt by Muslim militants' mob attack, on a false case of blasphemy against two Christian men. Fr James Channan OP and Asher Nazir paid a visit in Jaranwala and met with Christian affected families and Fr Khalid Mukhtar, Parish Priest and looked at the burned churches and houses. Please pray for the victims of false blasphemy cases in Pakistan. Affected Christians families shared that here we are with a sad and sorrowful heart and we are facing this violence by the name of religion because we are Christian and we are facing a terrible situation in Pakistan.

**Justice Qazi Faez Isa**, Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Pakistan along with his wife, paid a visit to the Christian-populated area of Jaranwala, where he met the Christian affected

families and assessed the conditions of the burnt buildings. Separately, in a statement issued after his visit to Jaranwala, Justice Isa quoted verses from the Holy Quran and said Muslims were told to fight against those who harmed churches. He highlighted that faith in Prophet Isa was one of the principles of Islam and recalled events from history where Muslim religious leaders had shown respect to Christianity.



The SC justice further stated that under Articles 295 and 295-A of the Constitution, a person who “hurt the religious sentiments of anyone” was liable to be punished. “Violating the Constitution is considered a grave crime ... what happened in Jaranwala was a violation of Pakistan’s law and Constitution,” he asserted.

**Caretaker Prime Minister, Anwar-ul-Haq Kakar, Caretaker Chief Minister of the Punjab, Muhsin Naqvi and Governor of the Punjab, Baligh Ur Rehman also visited Persecuted Christians of Jaranwala and consoled them.**



Pakistani bishop Azad Marshall said the Christian community was "deeply pained and distressed" by the events. "We cry out for justice and action from law enforcement and those who dispense justice, and the safety of all citizens to intervene immediately and assure us that our lives are valuable in our own homeland,"



Bishop Joseph Arshad said such incidents continued only



because such people were not punished. The culprits involved in the Jaranwala tragedy should be punished so that such incidents do not happen again, he demanded. He also urged for compensation for the damage caused to the churches and people's houses. He also urged that rehabilitation of the people of Jaranwala should be carried out on priority basis. Catholic bishops in Pakistan have south tough action against

whoever set 25 churches on fire and vandalized Christian homes over an alleged blasphemy claim in eastern Punjab province. Archbishop Joseph Arshad president of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Pakistan appealed to the Punjab government to take strict legal action against the attackers.

### **Interfaith Conference on Jaranwala incident at the Badshahi Mosque Lahore**

On 14th September, 2023 Maulana Abdul Khabir Azad Grand Imam and Khateeb of Badshahi Mosque and Fr. James Channan OP Director Peace Cetner organized a Conference on Jaranwala incident with the people of different religions at Badshahi Mosque Lahore. Maulana Abdul Khabir Azad was host and he warmly welcomed to all participants who were present from different religions.



Fr. James Channan OP, Allama Rashid Trabi, Allama Zubair Zaheer, Maulana Abdul Rahim, Abdul Baseer Azad, Fr. John Joseph, Asher Nazir, Rev. Dr. Marqus Fida, Samuel Payara, Allama Mubashir, Kashif Mirza, Pastor Majid Abel, Pastor Amjad Nimat and Mufti Abdullah were present as honorable guests.

**Maulana Abdul Khabir Azad said** that when this happened that time I was in Makkah and Fr. James Channan OP shared with me about this incident. As I came back, I organized a Press Conference at Press Club Lahore and as Muslim religious leaders we strongly condemned and demand for justice. He said Islam is a religion of peace, explicitly forbidding the burning of sacred places or religious artefacts. He said the teachings of respect and humanity were central to the Islamic faith, and the Constitution of Pakistan guaranteed the rights of all

minorities. He said that when we visited to Jaranwala we saw that people were in fear and 85 houses and 26 churches have been burnt. We looked that many women and children were crying for justice. They have lost everything and where we saw that some Muslim people save the lives of Christians. Maulana Azad emphasized that the tragic events in Jaranwala were a condemnable act aimed at disrupting the nation's harmony. He called for unity and the protection of Pakistan's security. He said that government of Pakistan and Army Chief of Pakistan have said that they will take decisive action against the culprits.

**Fr James Channan OP**, thanked all the participants. He also strong condemned the incident of Jaranwala and appealed to the government of Pakistan to punish those who are responsible for this act and compensate those Christians who houses have been destroyed. He was grateful to all who went to console the Christians and offered sympathy and also gave humanitarian help as well.

**Allama Zubair Ahmad Zaheer** shared in his views that sanctity of religious sites and places of worship of all faiths adding that no individual should take the law into their own hands. He emphasized the importance of presenting the facts transparently to the nation and avoiding the wrongful targeting of innocent.

**Pastor Majid Abel** said that I appreciate the visit of Maulana Abdul Khabir Azad in Jaranwala and his visit left positive effect to all the nation of Pakistan.

**Allama Rashid Turabi** shared that we are great creation of Lord and we are all from the generation of Adm. We should love with humanity and we should respect to humanity this is teaching of Islam.

**Pastor Amjad Nimat** and all others condemned this tragedy and demanded that all culprits involved in this tragedy to brought to justice and to prevent such horrible mob violence in future. The conference participants called for the sanctity of religious sites and places of worship of all faiths adding that no individual should take the law into their own hands. All speakers strongly condemned mob violence and demanded for justice of Jaranwala incident.

### **Interfaith Conference on the “Rights of Minorities in an Islamic State” at Minhaj University in Lahore**

Minhaj University organized conference on the rights of non-Muslims in an Islamic State on 20<sup>th</sup> of September 2023. Different faith leaders, religious scholars and representatives from various walks of life participated.

**President of Minhaj-ul-Quran International (MQI) Prof Dr Hussain Mohi-ud-Din Qadri** gave a talk on the rights of non-Muslims in an Islamic society in the light of the teachings of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). He said that the social order given by the Holy Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), was based on respect for each other and that all citizens of an Islamic state are asked to deal with one another with utmost respect. He also said that society, in general, and the government, in particular, are responsible for the protection of life, liberty, honour, and property of non-Muslim citizens. There is no room for Jaranwala like incidents in Islam and Pakistan. Prof Hussain Qadri said that

intolerance and lack of respect for the opinions of others are the biggest challenges facing us as a society. He said that if we want Pakistan to become a peaceful country, we have a duty to impart intellectual training to our youth.

**Archbishop Sebastian Francis Shaw** said: “I am very grateful to Dr Hussain Mohi-ud-Din Qadri for inviting all of us today. If all the things you have said are presented in newspapers and on television, especially if these teachings are broadcast in various places on national TV, private TV, and various channels in the month of Rabi-ul-Awwal, it will not take long before people’s thinking begins to change because education, knowledge, and information have the power to transform a person's mind; it is a process of molding the human mind. So, it will undoubtedly bring about a change.”



**Fr. Pascal Paulus OP**, Prior Vice Provincial, Dominican Order, Pakistan, commended the courageous stance of Dr Muhammad Tahir al-Qadri and Prof Hussain Qadri on the rights of non-Muslims, acknowledging their bravery and dedication of speaking up for justice. He reiterated all suggestions and recommendations of Prof Hussain Qadri with great respect.

**Fr. James Channan OP**, Director Peace Centre, Lahore, acknowledged and congratulated Prof Dr Hussain Mohi-ud-Din Qadri and the entire Minhaj-ul-Quran team for their consistent efforts, which contribute to the welfare of all humanity. Their work imparts lessons in love, justice, interfaith harmony, and peace.

**Khurram Nawaz Gandapur**, Secretary-General of MQI, addressed and thanked the distinguished guests and faith leaders. He highlighted the special struggle of Shaykh-ul-Islam Dr Muhammad Tahir-ul-Qadri and MQI to foster relations between Muslims and non-Muslims. When MQI was established in



1980, in Pakistan, the idea was that interfaith harmony could exist, but interfaith dialogue, as it should be in an Islamic nation, did not exist the way it should. So, he laid the foundation of the Muslim-Christian Dialogue Forum for the promotion of dialogue between the two largest religions in the world, Islam and Christianity. It became a significant part of our Islamic history, and the example of Shaykh-ul-Islam Dr Muhammad Tahir-ul-Qadri’s commitment to dialogue in this world was perhaps unprecedented before.

## Peace Conference on the incident of Jaranwala by Jamaat-e-Islami Pakistan

On 23<sup>rd</sup> August, 2023 Jamaat-e-Islami Pakistan organized Peace Conference about Jaranwala incident with interfaith leaders at Mansoorah, Lahore. Suraj ul Haq ameer Jamaat-e-Islami Pakistan was Chief guest in this is Peace Conference. Many prominent interfaith leaders were present in this conference as Fr. Pascal Paulus OP Prior Vice Provincial Ibn-e-Mariam Vice Province Pakistan, Bishop Azad Marshall Church of Pakistan, Sardar Bishan Singh, Sajid Phadia Hindu Leader, Bishop Nadeem Kamran Church of Pakistan, Santor Kamran Michael. Fr. Abid Tanveer Vicar General Faisalabad Diocese, Fr. Zafar Iqbal, Mr. Asher Nazir Executive Secretary Peace Center, Mr. Javed Kasury Emir Jamaat-e-Islami Punjab, Rev. Emmanuel Khokar, General Secretary Jamaat-e-Islami Punjab Central Nasr Goraya, President Al-khidmat Foundation Ikram Subhani, Emir District Dr. Saeed, Rana Abdul Waheed and Rana Attique participated in this Peace Conference. Mr. Javed Kasury Emir Jamaat-e-Islami Punjab welcomed to all honorable guest in Peace conference. He said that impatience is on the rise in



the society which must be curbed and questioned where was the local administration when planning or such heinous game was ongoing. “It has been routine that groups of people commit such acts and local police as well as the law enforcers show negligence which caused embarrassment for the country across the world,” he added.

**Emir Jamaat-e-Islami**

**Pakistan Sirajul Haq** while declaring Jaranwala’s incident as conspiracy of creating violence and unrest in country, has demanded to give stringent punishment publicly to the people involved in these crimes. Jamaat-e-Islami chief Sirajul Haq said that I have visited Jaranwala, where I personally witnessed the aftermath of the burnt houses and churches, and expressed a profound message of empathy and unity. During visit to the affected areas, I announced the reconstruction of the torched houses. I also announced a substantial initiative to provide interest-free loans to the young of Jaranwala, fostering their economic empowerment and growth. Sirajul Haq underscored the essence of Islam, highlighting its core values of peace, brotherhood, and coexistence.



“In this time of collective grief, we stand shoulder to shoulder with our Christian brethren,” remarked Sirajul Haq, emphasizing the importance of solidarity across religious lines. He asserted that such incidents can only be deterred by punishing the criminals involved in the incident.

“There is a need of putting in place international laws regarding sanctity of religions. We, in Pakistan are protectors of lives and properties of all non-Muslims.

**Bishop Nadeem Kamran** called these incidents as conspiracy of creating violence and unrest in the country and demanded to give stringent punishment publicly to the people involved in the crimes. He demanded to determine motives behind this conspiracy.



**Fr. Pascal Paulus OP** shared that “Our places of worship and people are not safe in any way due to this incident. We demand a transparent investigation into this regrettable incident for the supremacy of law and justice so that a better society is established where religion and harmony are respected.”

### International Day of Peace celebrated at Peace Center

On 21 September, 2023 Peace Center organized the UN International Day of Peace, 2023 with the theme of “ACTIONS FOR PEACE”. In this conference believers of different religions; Christianity, Islam and Sikhism participated at Peace Center Lahore, Pakistan. In this event Fr. Pascal Paulus OP Prior Vice Provincial, Dominican Order Pakistan was the Chief Guest. Fr James Channan OP, Director Peace Center, was the organizer this grand interreligious event. This year the International Day of Peace focused on the theme of “Actions for Peace” and how the 17 Sustainable Development Goals are essential to preventing conflict and working for the development of the people on earth where there is no hunger, no poverty, no illiteracy and no discrimination in the name of gender and that all lives on earth and under water are protected. And that there is justice for all and peace is promoted in the society. All participants expressed deep sorrow at the mob violence against Christians in Jaranwala in which 26 Churches and 86 houses were burnt on religiously motivated violence by the charged mob of militant Muslims on 16<sup>th</sup> of August, 2023. This tragic attack created a great panic and sense of insecurity and fear among the vulnerable Christians in Pakistan. All speakers gave references from the Holy Books; Holy Bible, Holy Quran and Guru Granth Sahib as well as founders of these religions on peace, harmony and respect for all human beings. All condemned mob violence against Christians in Jaranwala



where Religiously motivated violence by a few Muslim vigilantes attacked and burnt Christian churches and houses. Pakistan. The program started with interfaith prayers from Christians, Muslims and Sikh faiths.

**Fr. James Channan OP** welcomed the guests and talked about the theme of International Day of Peace “Action for Peace”. He said that every

year in Pakistan, our Peace Center organizes the program on International Day of Peace at the Peace Center, in which people of different religions are invited and this day we celebrate according to the theme of United Nations. It is celebrated all over the world, and this year we will take steps in action for peace. Today on the occasion of International Day of Peace, we strongly condemn the Jaranwala tragedy.

Fr James Channan OP said that we are grateful to the Prime Minister of Pakistan, Mr. Anwarul Haq Kakar, Chief minister of the Punjab, Mr. Mohsin Naqvi, Chief of Army Staff, General Asif Munir, Ameer of Jamat-E- Islami, Mr Saraj ul Haq, and many other prominent Muslim Ulama such as Grand Imam of the Badshahi Mosque, Maulana Abdul Khabir Azad, Grand Imam of Faisal Mosque in Islamabad, Dr. Muhammad Ilyas and many other religious leaders who visited Jaranwala and consoled suffering Christian.

**Fr. Pascal Paulus OP**, Prior Vice Provincial, Dominican Order, Pakistan shared his views that Jesus Christ gave the teaching of Love and Forgiveness. Love you neighbor as love yourself and we should see that who is my neighbor. Always we say that we love to Lord and we love humanity but if we see our actions, we see that very often we are not acting on our religious teachings of love and respect as we hate and discriminate people in the name of religion. All the religions teach peace, love, tolerance, acceptance, unity and justice then why we are going against the teaching of our religions. Here in this present situation, I want to ask you that as Pakistani nation how we can take actions to promote peace, love, interfaith harmony and justice. **Mufti Syed Ashiq Hussain** said that I am very thankful to Fr. James Channan OP and I am so much impressed with his services for peace and interfaith harmony among the different religions in Pakistan. In the Holy Bible we look that Jesus Christ is the Prince of Peace and in the incident of Jaranwala I looked in the visit of Jaranwala that Christian people are aware



about the teachings of Jesus Christ. They are demanding for peace and Justice in the incident of Jaranwala they were in peace they did not block the road, burnt the shops and public property and through legal process they raised their voice for justice to Prime Minister Chief Minister of Punjab and Chief Justice of Pakistan. As religious Muslim leaders and Imam of mosque I strongly condemn the incident of Jaranwala and I offer condolences to Christian

community. I have gone four times in Jaranwala. Islam is the religions of Peace and our religion give the teaching of love not hate from the people of other religions. **Sardar Sikandar Singh, a Sikh leader**, said that this is the beauty of Pakistan that we have people of different religions, faith and cultures. Minorities of Pakistan we are facing many issues and difficult because we are Hindus, Sikhs and Christians and by the name of religions we have to face discrimination, hate, fanaticism and religious violence by the people of majority religion in Pakistan. We need to become a one nation as Pakistani and together we should promote peace and interfaith harmony in Pakistan. Minorities of Pakistan always show the bright face of Pakistan to the world.



**Rev. Dr. Marqus Fida** said that I congratulate to all of you because you are the people of love and peace and you are the promoters of peace and interfaith harmony among the different religions in Pakistan. Through this program on International Day of Peace you are all people from different religions you are giving the message of peace and respect to the world. And then you can look for peace in the society when people do not see justice in such incidents and they do not trust in judicial system. **Allama Mustafa Chishti** said that in our society we should need to create awareness that no one has a right to accuse the other people, we have no right about the other holy books that they are wrong, we should respect all other religions and their Holy books and their places of worship as well religions in Pakistan and around the world. Towards the end Fr. James Channan OP thanked all respected speakers and all participants who made this event very meaningful and historic. All speakers gave inspiring and meaningful speeches. Fr. Akhtar Naveed OP offered the closing prayers.

### **National Interfaith Conference on the Rights of Non-Muslims in an Islamic State of Pakistan**

Pakistan Ulema Council Pakistan and International Interfaith Harmony Council Organized “Rights of Non-Muslims in an Islamic State” on 1<sup>st</sup> of October, 2023 at the celebration of the birth of Muhammad – the Prophet of Islam. This conference was organized in the Alhamara Hall Lahore. Hafiz Tahir Mehmood Ashrafi was the Chief Organizer. This conference attracted participants from various walks of life, representing diverse religious and political organizations. Over 500 scholars and religious leaders attended the event, presided over by Pakistan Ulema Council Chairman and President of the International Interfaith Harmony Council, Hafiz Tahir Mehmood Ashrafi. The Right Rev. Dr. Bishop Azad Marshall, Moderator Bishop of Church of Pakistan and Fr James Channan OP, Director, Peace Center were the Guests of Honor.



Addressing the conference Hafiz Tahir Mehmood Ashrafi, Chairman, said all members of minority communities in Pakistan are equal citizens. He said I do not like to address them as “minority” but they should be called ‘Non-Muslim” Pakistanis. It is for safeguarding non-Muslims lives, properties, dignity, and places of worship is not only a duty of the Pakistani State but

also a responsibility of all Muslims. He said Islam provided full protection of the lives, properties and places of worship of Christians and other minority communities as well. This is what we read in the Holy Quran and seen the life of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). Our governments must ensure that all rights of minorities are fully protected. The incident of Jaranwala in which 26 Church and over 86 houses of Christians were burnt. He said that I strongly condemn attack of Christians in Jaranwala and burning their churches and houses.



Christians must be provided justice and all culprits involved must be punished. He also sought forgiveness from the Christian community for the acts of vandalism against them in Jaranwala.

**Bishop Dr Azad Marshal** said that both Christian and Muslim religions are closer to each other but few evil elements have created

hatred between Muslims and Christians. He said we want to sow seeds of religious harmony and peace in Pakistan demanded justice for victims of religious violence in Jaranwala. Bishop Azad Marshall said we want justice and exemplary punishment for all those who are responsible for such mob violence against Christians.

**Fr. James Channan OP** Director Peace Center attended this Seerat Conference and congratulated the Muslim community on Eid Milad-ul-Nabi (Birthday of the Prophet of Islam – Hazrat Muhammad). While addressing this Seerat conference, he wished best wishes to Muslims around the globe. He strongly condemned the Jaranwala tragedy, burning of 26 Churches and around 86 houses. He demanded the protection of their religious freedom and insisted that the culprit elements must be brought to justice so that such tragedies can be avoided in the future

and to promote sustainable peace in society. He thanked the Government of Pakistan, Caretaker, Prime Minister of Pakistan, Mr. Anwar ul Haq Kakar, Caretaker Chief Minister Punjab, Mr. Mohsin Ali Naqvi, Chief of Army Staff, General Asim Munir and Justice Qazi Faiz Isa, Chief Justice of the Supreme Court



of Pakistan for visiting Jaranwala for visiting Jaranwala and damaged houses of Christians. Government of Pakistan committed to rebuild the damaged churches, houses also to offer compensation to the affected families.

## Conference on United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, 2023 Fostering Interfaith Harmony: A Catalyst for Peace and Progress

Superior University Lahore organized a conference on UN SDGs with the title of Fostering Interfaith Harmony: A Catalyst for Peace and Progress on 12 October, 2023 in Lahore. Interfaith leaders Fr. James Channan OP, Pundit Baghat Lal Khokar, Sardar Dr. Kalyan Singh, Abdul Waheed participated as speakers in this conference. More than 500 students participated in

this conference on United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, 2023. Superior University has soared to new heights, making Pakistan proud as it clinches a coveted spot among the top 25 Global Universities in the United Nations Academic Impact (UNAI) report on the Implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) Best Practices. This remarkable achievement underscores the institution's commitment to fostering sustainable development through education and innovation. The United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals, adopted in 2015, have set a global agenda to address pressing issues such as poverty, inequality, climate change, and more. These goals serve as a blueprint for a better and more sustainable future for all, Superior University is dedicated to turn these global objectives into local realities. Superior University's journey to this prestigious



ranking has been characterized by a relentless pursuit of academic excellence and a steadfast commitment to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. The factors that have contributed to this remarkable milestone are as follows: **Integrating SDGs into the Curriculum:** One of the key reasons for Superior University's success is its proactive approach to integrating the SDGs into its curriculum. All the faculties have tailored their programs to address the sustainable development challenges. This holistic approach ensures that graduates are not just academically proficient but also equipped with the knowledge and skills needed to drive positive change in their communities and beyond.

**Community Engagement:** Superior University's commitment extends beyond the classroom and research labs. The institution actively engages with local communities to implement SDG-related projects. Whether it's supporting clean energy initiatives, promoting gender equality, or improving access to education, the university plays a vital role in uplifting the communities it serves.

**Fr. James Channan OP** shared in his views that today the world population has reached 8 billion people according to the United Nations. In this World we have different religions, cultures, faiths, colors and languages and nations. We should understand that we are living with the people of different religions, faiths and cultures and with them we should accept them and we should live with them in harmony and peace. Our focus should be on combining things and we should be promoters of love and peace. We should play the role of unity among the people of different religions. **"Do unto others as you would have them do unto you"** is a simple but effective guide for relating with people of different religions, cultures, ethnicity and backgrounds. Today we see different wars among nations and religions and we should learn a

lesson from these wars. Here I want to say that we should give respect to differences. **The Pope** talks with the people of different religions on interfaith harmony and peace.

The World Interfaith Harmony Week was first proposed at the UN General Assembly on September 23, 2010 by H.M. King Abdullah II of Jordan. Just under a month later, on October 20, 2010, it was unanimously adopted by the UN and henceforth the first week of February will be observed as a World Interfaith Harmony Week.

### **German Delegation from MISSIO visits Peace Center Lahore, Pakistan**



Prominent religious leaders and Promoters of Interfaith harmony from different religions along with Fr James Channan OP very warmly welcomed the German delegation and they shared the impacts, challenges, opportunities and how they are promoting peace and interfaith harmony among the people of different religions in Pakistan.

German delegation from MISSIO Germany consisted of; President of MISSIO, Fr. Dirk Bingerner, Mr. Milan Lciv, Ms. Katja Voges, Ms. Sabrina Wiesen and Mr. Tomek Welke. This historic visit was made on 8th

November, 2023.

Fr. James Channan OP said that I am very happy that the German Delegation from MISSIO Germany came to the Peace Center to know our achievements, impacts, challenges and opportunities

regarding peace and interfaith harmony among the religions in Pakistan. He said that the Peace Center has a strong connection with the people of different religions as Hindu, Muslim, Sikh and Chrisitan in Pakistan through different peace and interfaith



activities. We are working with many interfaith organizations both at national and international levels.

Fr. James Channan OP shared that our focus is also on Christian Faith Formation for Christian youth, parents and families. It is of prime importance to know about the truths of our Christian



faith and dogmas as we live among the country of Muslim majority. We also organize special seminars and workshops to discuss the issues of forced conversions, forced marriages, misuse of blasphemy laws and other discriminatory laws in Pakistan. We discuss how to counter religious terrorism and religiously motivated violence such as in the Jaranwala incident.

**Mufti Ashiq Hussain** shared in his views that with Fr. James Channan OP we are working with many like-minded organizations, different community groups in many cities, villages at grass-root level through our interfaith groups and religious leaders for the promotion of peace



and interfaith harmony. He said Fr. James Channan OP is promoting love and tolerance through his peace activities according to Jesus Christ teaching **love to other people**. He is Global ambassador of Peace because he is not only working for Pakistani people, he is working for World peace. Fr. James Channan OP has received appreciation awards from five continents of the World. President of Pakistan and Governor of Punjab has given appreciation and National Peace Awards to Fr. James Channan OP for his wonderful services for the promotion of Peace and Interfaith harmony.

**Sardar Skindar Singh** said I am happy that today the German Delegation is with us in the Peace Center and Fr. James Channan gave me the opportunity to attend this meeting. I am

thankful to Fr. James Channan OP he is a great man and he devoted his life for the promotion of love, peace and interfaith harmony among the religions.

Always I honor Fr. James Channan OP he is a great man because he is working for a noble cause and he is uniting the people under one roof of the Peace Center. He is giving the message of Peace and Interfaith harmony to the people of different religions and for this mission we are working with him in Pakistan. We are working for the rights of minorities and fundamental rights as a citizen of Pakistan. This is our country and as interfaith religious leaders we are playing a positive role in the development of Pakistan.



**Pastor Dr. Majeed Abel** said that today I am happy because in this conference I am looking to those personalities which are in action and they are working for the promotion of peacebuilding and social cohesion in this society and they belong from Hindus, Sikhs, Christians and Muslims. Pakistan is a Islamic Republic State and Islam is a religion of State and in Pakistan majority of the people are Muslims and Christians, Hindus and Sikhs are in minority. In Pakistan majority and minority are not safe because we see that terrorist attack happen in anywhere so Mosque, Church, Temple is not safe and we hire security for the protection of people when we pray in Church, Mosque and Temple.



**Allama Zubair Abid** shared that in the Peace Center people of different religions come with one heart and with harmony together with one another and they get opportunity to promote love, respect, tolerance, peace and Interfaith harmony among the religions. Everybody Christian, Muslim, Hindu and Sikh feel that is our Peace Center because no discrimination no fanaticism is here among the religions. Everybody loves other people as human beings and they

respect one another and this is a good exercise and example to others and I think this is a great impact of Peace Center. The Peace Center changed the lives of people in a positive way and this is a great achievement.

**MS. Noreen Haroon** said that in Pakistan 97% are Muslims and 3% are other minorities such as Christians, Hindus, Sikhs and others. In Pakistan all the people of different religions know that the Peace Center is working for Peace and Interfaith harmony. We should give respect to the people of other religions and with honor we should give space. Fr. James Channan OP is organizing national and international events in the Peace Center especially International Women's Day, International Day of Peace, Christian Faith Formation programs and religious

festivals, Breast Cancer Awareness program. Faith is a very important thing for all religions and as Christian minority we are facing the problem of forced marriages, forced conversion and religious violence in our societies. Youth is the future of a nation. We should involve our interfaith youth and we give them an education of peace, love and tolerance and acceptance for the people of other religions.

**Allama Dr. Badar Munir** shared that in Pakistan we have people of different religions, culture and faith and they are living peacefully and they have all fundamental rights according to the Pakistani constitution. I am happy that MISSIO Germany is working for the people of all religions, not for only Christian community. I congratulate all guests of MISSIO Germany. We need together as human beings to work for humanity because this is a prior need of time. We



are promoting peace and interfaith harmony at different forums with Fr. James Channan OP. We are working for peacebuilding and social cohesion in the society.

**MS. Neelam Nisari** shared in her view that if we want to promote peace and interfaith harmony in our society then we should accept others and listen to others. We should talk to everyone to know each other for better understanding and strong

relationships among the people of different religions.

**Rev. Emmanuel Khokar** said I know Fr. James Channan OP and his work of peacebuilding among the people of different religions in the World. I am working with Fr. James Channan OP from many years and together we have attended many national and international conferences and events from Pakistan as Doha International Peace Conference. As promoters of peace and love we are giving our contribution to unite the religions and we are giving the education of peace not hate the people of other religions. The Peace Center plays an effective role in changing the minds of people and growing the seed of love in our heart and this is great work for humanity. **Pastor Amjad Nimat** said together we are working with the Peace Center and whenever we face discrimination and religious violence by the name of religion then we stand against negative thinking and we raise our voices for justice and equal rights for minorities.

**Fr. Dirk Bingerer from MISSIO Germany** said that I am thankful to all of you for this beautiful and wonderful honor. Pakistan is a very beautiful country and here we saw different cultures, faith, people of different religions and they all warmly welcomed in churches and Mosques. Today I am very much happy to meet you all in Peace Center Lahore because you are from the religions of Muslims, Christian, Hindu and Sikh and you are promoters of Peace and Interfaith harmony in Pakistan. When I was coming to Pakistan in my mind, I had many questions about the minorities of Pakistan like Christians, Hindus and Sikhs in Pakistan. After listening and meeting all of you I am happy that you belong from different religions but together with unity you are promoting peace and Interfaith harmony along with one another and you are living with peace and harmony. You are all lovers of Peace and humanity.

## S.P. Singha Award Ceremony at Governor House Lahore, Punjab

on 9<sup>th</sup> October, 2023 the ceremony of S.P Dewan Bahadur Singha Award.2023 organized by Mr. Samuel Payara Chairman Implementation of Minority Rights Forum (IMRF) at the Governor's House on Monday. Governor Punjab Muhammad Balighur Rehman was the chief guest of the award ceremony of S.P Singha award.

Fr. James Channan OP Director Peace Center, Chairman IMRF Samuel Payara, Sister Anna Bakshi were guests of honors and with it many other guests were present in the function. The Governor Punjab gave away Dewan Bahadur Singha Awards to those who have rendered outstanding



services in various fields. Mr. Samuel Payara welcomed all nominees and guests and he thanked the Governor of Punjab that every year we organize this S.P Singha Award ceremony

with the cooperation of Governor house Punjab. He said that in this award ceremony we are presenting 24 S.P Singha Award 2023 to different personalities from Pakistan. He shared that in 1942, Singha held a reception in Jinnah's honour and pledged his full support to the idea of Pakistan. In an infamous speech on a later occasion, he said, "At the time of partition of the subcontinent of India, in the entire country, the Christians should be counted with Muslims." In the run-up to the 1945-1946 elections, the All-Indian Christian League and All India Christian Association hailed the slogan, 'Live Long Pakistan.' In November 1946, Singha said, "from today Jinnah is our leader..."



The Governor Punjab presented Dewan Bahadur Singha Awards to those who have rendered outstanding services in various fields. **Mr. Asher Nazir** Executive Secretary Peace Center Lahore, Pakistan received **Dewan Bahadur S.P. Singha Award 2023** as promoter of Peace and Interfaith Harmony in Pakistan from Muhammad Baligh Ur Rehman Governor of Punjab, Pakistan and Fr. James Channan OP Director Peace Center at Governor House Punjab. With this Award he received a ***Certificate of Appreciation*** in recognition of his valuable services in Peace and Interfaith harmony and development of Pakistan.

## Director Norwegian Church Aid NCA Pakistan visited Peace Center Lahore

Ms. Masterson Anne Country Director Norwegian Church Aid NCA Pakistan visited Peace Center Lahore on 15 November, 2023. Fr. James Channan OP Director Peace Center Mr. Asher Nazir Executive Secretary and Madam Neelum Nisari Program Manager Peace Center warmly welcomed to Ms. Masterson Anne and Mr. Imran Munir Program Manager of NCA Pakistan.



Fr. James Channan OP said that I am very happy that you come to the Peace Center to know how with the people of different religions we are working for the promotion of peace and interfaith harmony. With great pleasure I want to share with you that Peace has good reputation at national and international level and we have strong connections with the people of different religions as Muslims, Christians, Hindus, and Sikh and with it we are working with many interfaith organizations, universities, colleges, lawyers, and Government of Pakistan at federal

and provincial level.

Fr. James Channan OP shared that our focus is also on Christian Faith Formation for Christian youth, parents and families. It is of prime importance to know about the truths of our Christian faith and dogmas as we live among the country of Muslim majority. We also organize special seminars and workshops to discuss the issues of forced conversions, forced marriages, misuse of blasphemy laws and other discriminatory laws in Pakistan. We discuss how to counter religious terrorism and religiously motivated violence such as in the Jaranwala incident. He shared that at times of natural calamities for example COVID-19 and floods Peace Center helped hundreds of families and offered them relief goods, warm clothes, food items and hygiene kits.



We publish books here and annual "A Theological Journal" and we regularly update our website [www.peacecenter.org.pk](http://www.peacecenter.org.pk). Peace Center has earned a good name and reputation both in Pakistan and around the globe for carrying our very important and much needed apostolate of the Catholic Church as well as of the Dominican Order to promote dialogue among religions and cultures and thus promote culture of peace, justice, reconciliation and healing. Christian – Muslim dialogue is very challenging in Pakistan and we are confronted with a lot of radicalism. But we will keep on playing our imperative to promote respect and love among all the people of different religions.

Masterson Anne appreciated the services of Peace Center and She congratulated to Fr. James Channan OP for his wonderful work of dialogue between different religions in Pakistan. She said that I know that peace Cetner has good image and reputation among the people of different religions and through Peace Center people of different religions are connecting and they are promoting peace and interfaith harmony among the religions in Pakistan. She said that I am working as Country Director of NCA Pakistan and Mr. Imran Munir is program Coordinator of NCA Pakistan and this is my second visit to the Peace Center. I want that as partners NCA



Pakistan and Peace Center worked together in Pakistan on peacebuilding, minority protection issues, Gender based violence. She said that NCA'S Program Framework 2020-2030 is guided by the organization's global strategy, Faith in Action, and contributes to reaching ambitions mapped out in the Sustainable Development Goals as well as the national strategies and plans in the countries NCA and its

partners operate. It also responds to the priorities in ACT Alliance's 2019-2026 global strategy and is informed by lessons and results from NCA's previous framework periods. Everything NCA does is built on the framework, and the ten-year timeframe ensures organizational commitment and predictability for NCA's partners.

### **University of Punjab organized a conference on International Human Right Day at Lahore, Pakistan**

On 9<sup>th</sup> of December 2023, Punjab University Department of Gender Studies in collaboration with the Ministry of Human Rights, Government of Pakistan organized an awareness and sensitization seminar on the topic UN's Universal Declaration of Human Rights and Gender Equality and awareness to end violence against women at Al Raazi Hall Punjab University Lahore. On this occasion, Chairperson, Department of the Gender Studies Prof Dr. Raana Malik, Director of Human Rights Pakistan, Ms. Lubna Mansoor, Irshad Waheed from Punjab Women Protection Authority, Fr. James Channan OP Director Peace Centre Lahore, Ahsan Nawaz from Ministry of Human Rights, Dr Ahsan Nawaz, Dr Fauzia Saleem Alvi participated as Guest of Honor by the Department of Gender Studies Punjab University. With the faculty members of Punjab University more than 300 students were present in this awareness and sensitization session.

**Dr. Raana Malik** welcomed the participants and shed light on the theme of International Human Rights Day this year "Freedom, Equality and Justice for All". She stressed the need to give respect to women. She focused on the role of youth as agents of change in the society and asked students to play their positive role.

**Fr. James Channan OP** talked about "Gender Balance: Prevent Violence against Women and Girls" and inter-faith harmony among the religions in Pakistan. He shared that each individual has equal rights irrespective of his / her religion. He said that Peace Center Lahore is promoting peace and inter-faith harmony among the religions and in Pakistan we have strong network of promoters of Peace from different religions in Pakistan. Youth can play a vital role to promote peace and interfaith harmony among the religions. said the most important thing for interfaith harmony was mutual respect between religious denominations and the acceptance of others. They further stated that interfaith harmony should be included in education curriculum nationwide. He also said that nobody should abandon their religion and beliefs, nor should they attack the religion and beliefs of others.



Through our positive actions we can create a peaceful society where everybody can live with their fundamental rights.

**Ms. Lubna Mansoor** talked about the importance of Human rights and how violence against women is the biggest violation of any human's right. Ahsan Nawaz enlightened the audience about the existing rights and how a common person can get benefit to know about their rights. He gave details on the recent legislations and initiatives by the Govt, of



Pakistan to provide safety and justice to women and other vulnerable groups in the country like Zainab Alert App, Helpline 1099 etc.

**Mr. Irshad Waheed** said that giving women's rights is important for a successful society. He stressed the need to analyse why in the presence of so many pro-women legislations, the status of women in the country is still miserable. He stressed the young students to come forward and participate in the development of the country. Later, the guests were presented with souvenirs.

### **Interfaith Harmony Conference in Lahore 200 Sikh pilgrims participated from India.**

On Dec 3, 2023 Hafiz Tahir Mehmood, Chairman Pakistan Ulama Council organized grand interfaith harmony conference at Lahore and in this conference 200 Sikh pilgrims / Yatri along with Sardar Jitander Singh and Sardar Khosindar Singh Bhattia participated from India. Distinguished speakers emphasized these values at the Interfaith Harmony Conference. First interfaith Christmas Cake cut in Lahore, Pakistan. Muslim, Christian, Hindu and over 200 Sikh Yatri / pilgrim from India joined share the joy and peace of Christmas. The conference, led by Hafiz Muhammad Tahir Mahmood Ashrafi, President of the International Interfaith Harmony Council, Chairman of Pakistan Ulema Council, and Prime Minister's Special Representative on Religious Harmony, saw contributions from leaders such as Sardar Ranjit Singh, Fr. James Channan OP, Syed Zia Ullah Shah Bukhari, Sohail Ahmed Raza, Pastor Emmanuel Khokhar, Pandit Kashi Ram, Rana Shahid, Maulana Aslam Siddiqui, Syed Ali Raza, and others.



The conference further welcomed diplomatic representatives from the United States, Turkey, and various other countries, fostering international collaboration and understanding.

Fr. James Channan OP gave a message of peace, harmony and respect for all at this grand conference. He stressed the need for collective efforts from all stakeholders to promote interfaith harmony in the country, as it is the key pillar of development. He said that our goal

is to bring together a diverse array of religious scholars and leaders from various faiths, all united under the common goal of promoting harmony and thwarting divisive agendas. He said the most important thing for interfaith harmony was mutual respect between religious denominations and the acceptance of others, nor should they attack the religion and beliefs of others. The religious scholars and leaders said the pursuit of peace is not a sign of weakness.



Both the government and the people of Pakistan deeply respect the sanctity of all religions, extending a warm welcome to Sikhs, Hindus, Buddhists, and followers of other faiths.

The conference's collective statement underscored that Islam rejects any notion of coercion or conversion. Engaging in such acts is not only contrary to Islamic teachings but also violates the laws of Pakistan, warranting legal action against the

perpetrator. In the present context, they said fostering dialogue among followers of diverse religions is essential. Pakistan warmly embraces Sikh pilgrims during the commemoration of Baba Guru Nanak's birth anniversary. Let us designate 2024 as a year dedicated to peace, love, tolerance, and interfaith harmony, promoting unity and understanding among all.

Expressing a desire to live harmoniously with neighboring nations, Ashrafi noted the Kartarpur border's opening as a gesture toward peace. He said Pakistan always whole-heartedly welcomed all religious tourists coming from across the world. Kartarpur Corridor was made operational as a gesture of peace and the Sikh pilgrims were invited to visits their holy places in Pakistan. He mentioned that Muslim religious leaderships were also playing their effective role for promotion of interfaith harmony in the country, adding that Islam always advocates peace as forced marriages and forced conversions of religion was prohibited in Islam.

### **Joint Interfaith Conference in Lahore to Promote Harmony Among Religions**

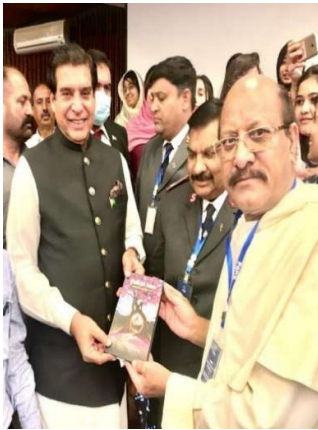
Fr James Channan: Prominent Muslim, Christian, Hindu and Sikh leaders are addressing a join Press Conference in Lahore. The leaders included: Archbishop Sebastian Shaw. Bishop Azad Marshall, Bishop Alvin, Allama Tahir Mahmood Ashrafi, Allama Zubair Abid, Bishop Romal



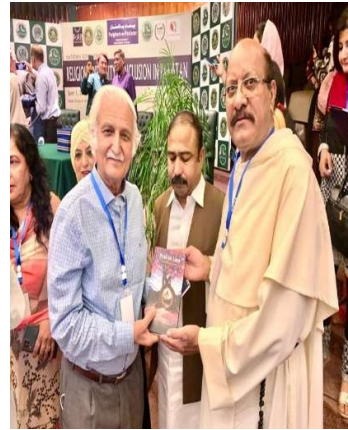
Shah, Fr James Channan OP, Pastor Emmanuel Khokhar, Bhagat Lal Khokhar, Sardar Sikandar Singh and others. The crucial issues of Forced Conversions and Marriages of minor girls as well as murder of a Sri Lankan in Sialkot on false blasphemy accusation. All agreed

that whosoever misuses blasphemy laws and falsely accuses any person must be booked under the same laws and punished. The government must ensure the safety of all religious minorities and punish those who convert minorities by force and marry minor girls.

## **Fr. James Channan OP presented his book “Path of Love: A Call for Interfaith Harmony” to Raja Pervaiz Ashraf former Caretaker Prime Minister of Pakistan and Speaker of National Assembly**



Fr. James Channan OP, met Raja Pervaiz Ashraf, former Caretaker Prime Minister and Speaker of National Assembly in Islamabad and presented his book “Path of Love: A Call for Interfaith Harmony”. Fr James Also shared with him about activities of interfaith harmony and peace which take place at Peace Center in Lahore. Fr James Channan presented his book to Mr. Farhat Ullab Babar,



Advisor to the President of Pakistan, Mr. Asif Ali Zardari. Both of these leaders are prominent member of the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP).

## **Interfaith meeting with US Consul General, Ms. Kristin Hawkins at Lahore’s Badshahi Mosque.**

In this gathering, organized by Maulana Azad, underscored the importance of interfaith harmony and dialogue, as well as US support for religious freedom & mutual understanding. Addressing the participants Ms. Kristin Hawkin, said: “I had heard about the rich history and culture of Lahore as well as Punjab when I was posted here, and I am privileged to be here to see the magic casements of history and culture.” The consul general said: “It was such an amazing experience to visit the Badshahi Mosque Lahore and see diversity of the historic site”, adding that she was impressed with the relics from the Muslim, Hindu and Sikh religion, which illustrated the rich cultural diversity and inter-faith experience that Pakistan had for the past so many centuries.

In the visit of Badshahi Mosque Lahore she met Interfaith leaders Christian, Muslim, Hindu and Sikh religious leaders Maulana Abdul Khabir Azad, Archbishop Sebastian Shaw, Bishop Nadeem Kamran, Ms. Kristin Hawkin, Fr. James Channan OP, Rev Dr Marqus Fida, Allama Raghav Naemi, Allama



Tarabi, Allama Eali Ullah Shah Bukhari, Sardar Granthi, Allama, Hafiz Kazim Raza Naqvi, Allama Randhawa, Pandit Baghat Lal Khokhar who have dedicated their lives in promoting interfaith harmony and peace in Pakistan and elsewhere.

## Hindu Diwali celebrated by interfaith leaders

Diwali, the festival of lights, joy, prosperity and happiness. It is a five-day long celebration that



commences with Dhanteras and ends with Bhaiya Dooj. The festival of Diwali is celebrated on the darkest night of the year in the Hindu month of Kartik. This festival is being celebrated on Kartik Amavasya. People celebrate this festival with great grandeur and enthusiasm and enjoy it with their family, friends and relatives.

Peace Center staff Mr. Asher Nazir Executive Secretary Peace Center and URI CC Coordinator of COPE CC and Madam Neelum Nisari Program Manager Peace Center and URI CC Coordinator of Golden Star CC participated in the celebration of Diwali at Avari Hotel Lahore, Pakistan. Anglo Asian Friendship Society URI CC arranged this beautiful celebration at Avari Hotel Lahore. Mr. Asher Nazir and Madam Neelum Nisari presented sweet and flowers to Sunita Maunawar Chand she was the host of the ceremony of Diwali at Avari Hotel Lahore, Pakistan. As host of the Diwali celebration program, Madam Sunita Munawar welcomed all guests and She shared that Diwali is an important religious festival in the Hindu calendar, as it marks the day of Lord Rama's return home after a 14-year exile. Many people were present from different religions and they participated in this program and they shared gifts and sweets with the Hindu community on Diwali. They



shared that, for the stability of Pakistan, we should promote the culture of love, tolerance, peace, interfaith harmony



and brotherhood to make Pakistan strong, because Pakistani minorities can play a positive and important role for a strong Pakistan. Bishop Sylvester, Mr. Asher Nazir, Mr. Samson Salmat and Qari Muhammad Ahmad, Shri Ram shared in his

views that as Pakistani we are together and we are One Nation. We are living with peace and interfaith harmony in Pakistan and we are happy. Together we celebrate religious festivals as Diwali, Eid, Christmas and festivals of Sikh religions. Today we are all present from different religions and we are sharing love, Joy. gift and sweet with Hindu brother and sisters. We appreciate Government of Pakistan that they are working for the rights of Minorities and they are organizing many programs for the promotion of peace and interfaith harmony in Pakistan. We as Pakistanis are united in our happiness as well as in sorrow. We celebrate all our religious, cultural and national occasions together.

## Meeting with the new Apostolic Nuncio, Most Reverend Msgr. Germano Penemote in Islamabad

Fr. James Channan OP Director, along with Asher Nazir, Executive Secretary and Madam Neelam Nisari, Program Manager of Peace Center paid and had a meeting with new Apostolic Nuncio, Most Reverend Msgr. Germano Penemote in Islamabad, Pakistan.

Fr. James Channan OP briefed him about the activities and programs of Peace Center for the promotion of Interfaith Harmony and Peace among the people of different religions in Pakistan, especially among Christians and Muslims. He shared the update and in present situations of Pakistan how the Peace Center is promoting and playing an effective and important role to create peace, unity, love and tolerance among the people of different religions in Pakistan.

Fr. James Channan OP said that in the result of our peace and dialogue work now many people from different religions like Muslims, Hindus and Sikhs are working and collaborating with us as promoters of peace and interfaith harmony and in many issues and conflicts they are with us and together we raise our voices for justice and equal rights for minorities in Pakistan on different forums. He shared in a special way about Maulana Abdul Khabir Azad, the Grand Imam and Khateeb Badshahi Mosque in Lahore. He is working very closely with Fr James Channan since many years for



the promotion of peace and interfaith harmony. These meetings have brought forth much results. But still in Pakistan as Christian, we are facing many problems and issues regarding motivated religious violence, discrimination and injustice. We are working and we have to face many challenges. We are promoters of love, peace and interfaith harmony and through our actions and different activities on the platform of Peace Center Lahore we are playing a role of connector not divider among the religions.

His Excellency, Msgr. Germano Penemote, highly appreciated to Fr. James Channan OP director Peace Center, for his wonderful promotion of Interfaith Harmony and Peace among the people of different religions Muslims, Christians, Hindus and Sikhs in Pakistan. He said that I am very much impressed with the work of Peace Center in Lahore and I will visit the Peace Center Lahore in 2024 and I will be happy to meet with interfaith leaders.

## **New Apostolic Nuncio, Archbishop Germano Penemote visited Badshahi Mosque Lahore with top Catholic Religious Leadership**

Bishop Indrias Rehmat, Archbishop Joseph Arshad, Archbishop Sebastian Shaw, Maulana Abdul Khabir Azad, Apostolic Nuncio, Archbishop Germano Penemote, Fr James Channan OP, Bishop Yousaf Sohan and Fr Pascal Paulus OP.



On 9<sup>th</sup> November, 2023 His Grace, Archbishop Germano Penemote, Apostolic Nuncio visited Maulana Abdul Khabir Azad, Grand Imam of the Badshahi Mosque Lahore along with the top Catholic Religious Leadership of Pakistan which included: Archbishop Sebastian Shaw, Archbishop of Lahore, Archbishop Bishop Joseph Arshad,

Archbishop of Islamabad/ Rawalpindi, Bishop Indrias Rehmat, Bishop of Faisalabad, Bishop Yousaf Sohan, Bishop of Multan, Fr Pascal Paulus OP, Prior Vice Provincial, Dominican Order Pakistan and Fr James Channan OP, Director, Peace Center, Lahore. Maulana Abdul Khabir Azad, very warmly welcomed His Grace, Archbishop Germano Penemote and other guests. He shared about the history of the Badshahi Mosque that it was built in 1673 by the Moghal Emperor Aurangzeb Alimgir and that it is the second largest mosque in Pakistan with the capacity of 100,000 worshipers at a time. Most of the Presidents, Prime Ministers and other dignitaries who come to Lahore, visit this mosque. Maulana said he has opened the doors of this mosque to the believers of all religions and that he has organized several interfaith conferences in this royal mosque and Fr James Channan and has participated in several of them and has given very inspiring speeches. Maulana Azad also mentioned his work with Sant' Egidio and his visit and audience with His Holiness Pope Benedict XVI in the Vatican.



Maulana Syed Muhammad Abdul Khabir Azad said that I want to share with you that me and Fr. James Channan OP are already working for the promotion of Peace and interfaith harmony and together we have organized many programs, conferences, religious festivals and events with the people of different religions at national level. Together we have attended many international conferences in different countries and in United Nations and we have represented to Pakistan and show the bright face of Pakistan to the World. We proved that how together as Muslims and Christian we are living

together with love and peace and in Pakistan we are a good example of interfaith harmony and peace. He assured that government of Pakistan is very much in favor of interfaith dialogue and has established Interfaith Dialogue Ministry. He also presented a joint Declaration of 10,000 Muslim Ulama / religious leaders on peaceful coexistence and condemning terrorism, violence and extremism and stressing the protection of minorities. Archbishop Sebastian Shaw shared the grave need and programs on interfaith dialogue and highly appreciated the role of Maulana Azad and Fr James Channan in this regard. Bishop Yousaf Sohan, Chairman of the National Catholic Commission of Interreligious Dialogue and Ecumenism also emphasizes the grave importance of interfaith dialogue and about his planned programs in this regard. Archbishop

Joseph Arshad, Bishop Indrias Rehmat, Fr Pascal Paulus and Fr James Channan also shared about the importance of interfaith dialogue and commitment of the Catholic Church in promoting this apostolate.

His Grace, Germano Penemote, highly appreciated the grand welcome by Maulana Azad and for the interfaith activities he is doing. He also shared that His Holiness Pope Francis has laid a great emphasis in dialogue among all religions especially Muslims and Christians. His Grace mentioned the famous document “Human Fraternity” which was signed by him and Grand Imam of Al-Azhar, Ahmed Al-Tayab in Abu Dhabi on 4<sup>th</sup> of February, 2019.

His Grace, Archbishop Germano Penemote, shared that all religions teach respect for humanity, I got a lot of love from the people of Pakistan and I think that the places of worship of all religions can bring peace and love to all of us.

He expressed his great joy about the interfaith dialogue which is going on in Pakistan and further encouraged to keep up this very important apostolate.

After the meeting a d guided tour of the mosque was also given. It was a very historic day as top Catholic leadership gathered for Interreligious Dialogue in the Grand Badshahi Mosque. This grand and historic meeting was facilitated by Fr James Channan OP

### **Interfaith Christmas Celebration at President’s House in Islamabad**

The Ministry of Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony organized the Interfaith Christmas Celebration Ceremony on 21<sup>st</sup> December, 2023 at President’s House

Christmas Cake cutting ceremony with the President of Pakistan

Islamabad. President of Pakistan Dr. Arif Alvi was the Chief Guest and Federal Minister of Religious Affairs Dr Aneeq Ahmed was the organizer for the Interfaith Christmas Celebration, 2023. Fr James Channan read a passage from the Holy Bible at this grand event to celebrate the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ - the Prince of Peace. The honorable personalities Archbishop



Dr. Joseph Arshad, Bishop Nadeem Kamran, Bishop Irfan Jamil, Fr. James Channan OP, Maulana Abdul Khabir Azad were present. A large number of Parliamentarians, religious leaders from Muslim, Christian, Hindu, Sikh and Bahai faiths participated in the Interfaith Christmas Celebration. President Dr. Arif Alvi reiterated the government’s unwavering commitment to ensuring peace, tranquility, and equal rights for all citizens, regardless of caste, creed, or

religion. He highlighted the Islamic teachings, as pronounced by Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah, the Founder of Pakistan, and enshrined in the Constitution of Pakistan, emphasizing the duty of the Islamic welfare state to safeguard the basic rights of religious minorities.



President Alvi acknowledged Lord Jesus Christ as an embodiment of peace and affection, values much needed in today's strife-ridden world. He conveyed a

message to the world, urging an end to wars, stating that conflicts diminish the value of human life and emphasizing the teachings of Islam and other religions that stress the importance of human life. The ceremony, organized by the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony, brought together parliamentarians, religious leaders, members of different faiths, diplomatic corps, and Christian families. President Alvi expressed concern over atrocities in Gaza, stressing the need for a ceasefire and denouncing the continued violence against Palestinians.

Referring to Pakistan's history, he mentioned the simultaneous resolution over Palestine when the Pakistan Resolution was passed in 1940, reaffirming the two-state solution. President Alvi praised the equal rights enjoyed by all



communities in Pakistan, highlighting the country's commitment



to interfaith harmony and unity. He commended the judiciary for its role in protecting the rights of religious minorities and appreciated the contributions of minorities to the social and economic uplift of the

nation. President Alvi also expressed concern about the treatment of minorities in India and emphasized the need to reinforce the spiritual message of peace,

empathy, and affection, as spread by Jesus Christ.



Caretaker Minister for Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony, Aneeq Ahmed, urged religious leaders to promote peace and love globally. Archbishop Dr. Joseph Arshad and Bishop Nadeem Kamran also emphasized the importance of reinforcing brotherhood, affection, and unity among different religious communities,

appreciating the steps taken by Muslims and the government to protect the equal rights of minorities in Pakistan.

## Christian Youth Faith Formation Programs



Peace Center Lahore organized Christian Youth Faith Formation Program on 25<sup>th</sup> April, 2023 at Lahore in Lahore in which 45 Christian youth participated from the different location of Lahore. Fr. James Channan OP, Director of Peace Center Lahore, was the host and he warmly welcomed the Christian youth in Christian Youth

Faith formation program. As speaker Fr. Tufique Younis OP, Mr. Asher Nazir and Madam Neelum Nisari participated and as speaker they talked on Christian faith formation with youth.

Fr. James Channan OP shared in his welcome note that the prime motive of the Peace Center Lahore is to create Peace and Interfaith harmony among various religions living in Pakistan. Faith Formation of Christians is an integral part of it so that our Christinas do have very strong faith formation as we are living in an Islamic state. In our programs religious scholars, representative of civil societies, teachers, political leaders, media and lawyers, youth



and women participate in interreligious dialogue. The Peace Center is rendering remarkable services in highlighting minority issues and social and Christian youth faith formation. Pakistan is a country with a rich and diverse cultural heritage, abundant natural and human resources and an important geopolitical position. Pakistan is an Islamic State. It is a developing country and politically unstable. The majority of the people living in Pakistan are religious-minded, kind and loving. They care for each other

with brotherly love and affection. There are serious challenges to Christians living among Muslims in Pakistan. The Church in Pakistan has to struggle for basic human rights. It has to struggle for its right to run schools and give religious education, so necessary for the life and the future of the community. The Church has to battle daily against discrimination and intolerance. Fr Taufiq Younas OP shared that our youth is facing various types of challenges, like identity crisis, poverty, lack of education, forced conversions, force marriages and other forms of persecution. In such situations it's often possible to go astray and look for the short cuts or to become pessimistic. Through such activities the Church is able to prepare them to be very strong in all situations. So, it is one of the ways to keep them together despite all hardships.



Our faith formation methods provide youth with opportunities to explore human values in a critical circumstance and to test their own values through personal reflection and experience. faith formation must be firmly founded on their Christian faith, culture and context. Christian faith formation needs to promote a process that seeks to develop and support both human and faith dimensions of Youth. It must remind the youth

that the gifts which they have are to be used for the common good. The parishes in Pakistan are committed to sponsoring the development and maturation of the Christian faith of the community. Therefore, the aspects like: the content of Christian faith, the dimensions of faith development, the surroundings in which catechesis is given, the persons to whom the faith formation is offered, the persons who are the agents for offering the faith formation, the methods of imparting the Christian faith, and the organization of parish programs with specific goals should be our concern if we are serious about deepening the faith of our people.

Church is to help people believe that Jesus is the Son of God so that believing they may have life in His name. Every pastor has to take upon himself the responsibility of building up the body of Christ, which includes basically the formation of faith of the community who are children, youth, and adults. In Pakistan, we are facing numerous challenges to Christian youth

faith formation; we live our faith in an Islamic context. During the last few decades, the process of Islamization has greatly influenced our political, social, and family life. The rapid industrialization has left a profound impact on our people and on the environment. Certain religious sects are attracting some of our faithful away from the Church. The growing influence of media culture poses a tremendous challenge. Media is having its



good and bad effects on the attitudes, morals and beliefs of our people. Another major challenge is of missionary zeal. We are not reaching out to the people and that is why we are not aware of their actual needs and problems. Signs of hope and new life are still alive. Young priests, religious and sisters are also making sure of the participation of youth in the Church activities. New ministries for youth are flourishing and new ways of youth faith formation are also being discovered by the Church at the universal and local level. The Church in Pakistan is encouraging the initiatives of inculturation and harmonizing religious education with cultural education for evangelization purposes. The traditional values are examined on the parameter of the gospel values. Religious piety and Marian devotion are helping tools for proclamation of the gospel and faith formation in rural areas as well as in big cities. All participants had a very fruitful discussion and workshop They highly admired the program of the Peace Center and said that such events strengthen our faith and provide us very good information to live in our Islamic society with firm faith. All of them were very grateful for these programs.

## Conference on Christian Theology, witness and practice in the context of Islam and Pakistan: Promoting understanding and discipleship

On 22<sup>nd</sup> October, 2023 Christian Study Center (CSC) organized a conference on Christian Theology, witness and practice in the context of Islam and Pakistan: Promoting understanding and discipleship at CSC Rawalpindi. 35 participants from different churches and organizations participated in this conference. Fr. James Channan OP, Mr. Asher Nazir and Madam Neelam Nisari participated from Peace Center Lahore. Rev. Prof. Dr. Charles Amjad Ali was the keynote speaker in this conference.



Fr. Raphael Menga OP, Dr. Farhana Nazir and Dr. Maqsood Kamal were resource persons and Fr. James Channan OP was moderator. The resource persons talked on different topics as Fr. Raphael Māhanga OP shared his views on Participation of the Church with Christian community at all levels. Dr. Farhana Nazir talked on who is my neighbour in the context of Holy Bible. Dr. Maqsood Kamal talked on Christian theology in the Islamic context of Pakistan.

Mr. Christopher shared the introduction of Christian Study Center and objective of the conference. He gave the introduction of CSC Rawalpindi. The Christian Study Centre was founded in 1967 as an institution firmly rooted from its inception in the ecumenical tradition and vision of the Church, with the support and guidance of numerous ecumenical Church organizations and individuals, and commenced formal operations in 1968. The Centre was conceived as an independent, non-profit institution for the express purpose of investigating Christianity and Islam. Over time, it transformed into a hub for dialogue, social change, human and minority rights, peacebuilding, and interfaith harmony. The Christian Study Centre reflects our commitment to deepening faith, promoting interfaith harmony, and fostering intellectual engagement within a faith-based context.

Bishop Samuel Azariah, Director of Christian Study Centre, welcomed the participants and he talked about the objectives of the conference on Christian theology, witness and practice in the context of Islam and Pakistan: Promoting understanding and discipleship.

He said that God's plan from the beginning was to form an inclusive community. Throughout biblical history, this vision has focused on a universal brotherhood, a chosen nation, and the church. The human tendency is to limit relationship and responsibility. An individual's concerns center around self, one's family, and one's people. Men and women follow only at a distance the God who "loved the world and gave Himself for it" (John 3:16). The good of the community is a higher principle than individual wants or needs. 2. In the story of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10) Jesus stressed that neighborliness extends beyond family and racial boundaries and takes precedence over religious duties and commercial interests. Programs which benefit only one family or group and therefore deny the principle of community should

not be supported financially. Biblical patterning would encourage a shift of concern from self, to family, to community. Community is a more biblical concept than communalism. Building bridges of understanding between ethnic groups is a Kingdom activity. It accords with God's creation intent.

In first session Fr. Rapheal Menga OP talked on participation of the church with Christian community at all level and through sharing and questions answering he involved the participants.



From Holy Bible he shared the verse that I have given you an example, that you also should do just as I have done to you. If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them. Who is my neighbour?" he asked Jesus. You see, rabbinical teaching during this time taught that one's neighbour could be narrowly defined as a fellow observant Jew. Tax collectors, gentiles, and

especially Samaritans were excluded. Galatians 1:4: The Lord Jesus Christ is the One "who gave Himself for our sins so that He might rescue us from this present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father." He gave Himself for our sins; He paid the penalty and provided atonement.

Dr. Farhana Nazir talked on the topic of the theology of the neighbor and she shared the story of the Good Samaritan in Luke's Gospel (10:25-37) is Jesus Christ most well-known teaching.

It epitomizes the heart of Christian faith and the great Commandment to love God and one's neighbors.

"Go and do likewise" like the Samaritan is not well understood and less often put into practice.



The Samaritan's example sets a standard that is not met by random acts of kindness; Samaritan-like neighbor love means acting with courage, compassion, and generosity in boundary-breaking solidarity to care for those most in need. The Samaritan's actions depict the preferential option for the poor. This dissertation proposes a "theology of neighbor"



Dr. Maqsood Kamal shared the situation of Christian before and after partition of Pakistan. In present era he presented a brief analysis of Christian in social, political and religious aspect. He shared that Christians have continued to suffer targeted violence and other abuses, including land-grabbing in rural areas, abductions and forced conversion, and the vandalization of homes and churches. Throughout history, Christians have faced persecution and opposition for their faith. Jesus Himself warned His

disciples that they would be hated and persecuted for His name's sake ([John 15:20](#)). As followers of Christ, we may encounter hostility, discrimination, or even physical harm because of our beliefs. However, we are called to stand firm in our faith and trust in God's strength to overcome these challenges.

Challenges play a significant role in our spiritual growth as Christians, shaping and molding us into the people God intends us to be. Fr James Channan OP, also shared that we have important role to play in Pakistan. We must have very strong faith and give witness of our faith among the vast majority of Muslims – among whom we are living in Pakistan. Our faith must be like a rock which cannot be shaken. CSC and Peace Center are playing a very vital role in this regard. And our community is immensely benefiting from our seminars and conferences. We will keep on playing our important role in this regard.

### **Interfaith Christmas Celebration at Peace Center Lahore**

Peace Center Lahore organized annual Interfaith Christmas Celebration on 23<sup>rd</sup> December, 2023 at Peace Center with the people of different religions. It was to celebrate the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ – the Prince of Peace. In this gathering more than 100 delegates Christian, Muslim, Hindu and Sikh religions participated. Passage from the Gospel of St Luke about the birth was read, Christmas Carols were sung, speeches on the significance of Christmas and need of sharing of Christmas joy with all around us was emphasized. Christmas cake was cut. Children



were presented Christmas gifts to children. Festive dinner was served to all. As well as Peace Awards were presented to prominent personalities and promoters of interfaith harmony and peace from different religions.

The honorable guests included; Allama Muhammad Zubair Abid, Dr. Marqus Fida, Pastor Amjad Niamat, Rev. Dr. Majeed Abel, Rev. Emmanuel Khokar,



Sardar Sikandar Singh, Pandit Bhagat Lal Khokar, Mufti Ashiq Hussian, Allama Badar Munir, Prof. Mehmood Ghaznavi, Sardar Kalyan Singh, Ms. Naureen Akhtar, Maulana Abdul Khabir Azad, Sohail Ahmad Raza, Allama Asghar Arif Chishti, Allama Asim Makhdoom, Syed Nau Bahar Shah. Program started with the prayer of Rev. Dr. Majid Abel and Fr. Akhtar Naveed OP recited the Holy Bible. Fr. James Channan OP Director Peace Center was host. Mr. Asher Nazir Executive Secretary Peace Center invited, Fr. James Channan OP for welcome note. Fr. James Channan OP welcomed all the guests and wished them a very warm and blessed Christmas.



He said: “Jesus Christ born and gave the message of peace and love to the whole world. He is the Prince of Peace and we are following His teachings.” He shared that I am happy to in this interfaith Christmas Celebration a big number of interfaith people is present and as Christians, Muslims, Sikhs and Hindus together we are celebrating Christmas at Peace Center. This is the season of sharing love, peace, joys and happiness. Christmas brings joy to

everyone on earth. In this Interfaith Christmas Celebration this is sign of joy that a large number of peace-loving Christian, Muslim, Hindu and Sikh leaders and families joined. May Peace and Joy of Christmas always remain with us and the entire world!



Allama Muhammad Zubair Abid, Sardar Sikandar Singh, Pandit Baghat Lal Khokar, Syed Nau Bahar Shah, Dr. Marqus Fida, Mufti Ashiq Hussain and Advocate Chaudhry Ishtiaq

With Fr. James Channan OP Interfaith leaders cut the cake with joy and all were happy that they were part of this interfaith Christmas celebration at Peace Center. All the honorable guests were very happy and enjoyed the different activities; they also joined

the Christmas Cake Cutting Ceremony and wished one another a very blessed and Merry Christmas. Christmas carols were sung by Dominicans brothers and people were very much impressed with this program.

Fr. James Channan OP announced that from many years for the promotion of Peace and Interfaith harmony with many important personalities from different religions and together we are promoting peace and interfaith harmony among the religions in Pakistan. different religions

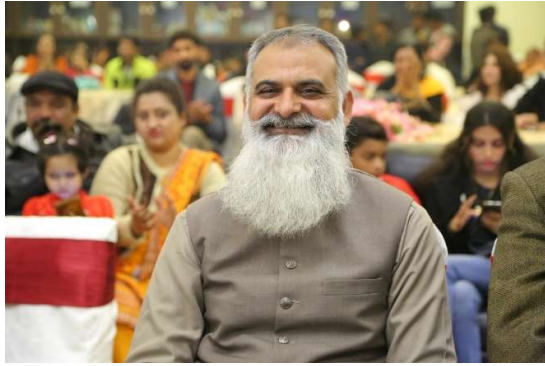


are working with Peace Center for the promotion of peace and interfaith harmony among the different religions in Pakistan. Today we present Peace Award to 20 important interfaith personalities from Peace Center Lahore because they are working as promoters of Peace and Interfaith harmony among the people of different religions in Pakistan.

Fr. James Channan OP presented Peace Award to 20 Interfaith Leaders who are promoting peace and interfaith harmony in Pakistan. Peace Awards given to Muslim, Christian, Hindus and Sikh personalities, as Allama Muhammad Zubair Abid, Dr. Marqus Fida, Pastor Amjad Niamat, Rev. Dr. Majeed Abel, Rev. Emmanuel Khokar, Sardar Sikandar Singh, Pandit Bhagat Lal Khokar, Mufti Ashiq Hussian, Allama Badar Munir, Prof. Mehmood Gaznavi, Sardar Kalyan Singh, Ms. Naureen Akhtar, Maulana Abdul Khabir Azad, Sohail Ahmad Raza, Allama Asghar Arif Chishti, Allama Asim Makhdoom, Syed Nau Bahar Shah.



Fr. James Channan OP congratulated to all awardees and he presented to them Peace Awards from Peace Center in the celebration of Interfaith Christmas Program.



Interfaith leaders distributed Christmas gifts among the children and they prayers offered for the world peace. May the peace and joy of Christmas always remain with us



All those who participated in the annual Christmas celebration were very happy and thrilled to participate and all of them were very grateful for the interfaith Christmas celebration, the focus of which was our Lord Jesus Christ – the Prince of Peace!

**Recipients of the Peace Awards in Recognition of their Valuable Services in  
Promoting Interfaith Harmony and Peace**

| <b>No</b> | <b>Name</b>                                                                                          |
|-----------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1         | Sardar Sikandar Singh (Sikh)<br>Sikh leaders and promoter of interfaith dialogue                     |
| 2         | Allama Dr. Badar Munir<br>Promoter of interfaith dialogue (Muslim)                                   |
| 3         | Allama Muhammad Zubair Abid<br>Chairman Interfaith Harmony and Peace Network Pakistan (Muslim)       |
| 4         | Rev. Dr. Marqus Fida<br>Chairman, Global Mission Awareness (Christian)                               |
| 5         | The Very Rev. Emmanuel S. Khokhar<br>Dean of Joining Hands Cathedral, Diocese of Raiwind (Christian) |
| 6         | Peer Syed Nau Bahar Shaw<br>Prominent Shia leader and promoter of interfaith dialogue (Muslim)       |
| 7         | Mufti Syed Ashiq Hussain<br>Promoter of interfaith dialogue (Muslim)                                 |
| 8         | Rev. Yuel Bhatti<br>Peace Promoter (Christian)                                                       |
| 9         | Samuel Payara<br>Activist of Minorities Rights (Christian)                                           |
| 10        | Pastor Amjad Niamat<br>Peace Promoter (Christian)                                                    |
| 11        | Rev. Dr. Majeed Abel<br>Peace Promoter (Christian)                                                   |
| 12        | Pandit Bhagat Lal Khokar<br>Peace Promoter (Hindu)                                                   |
| 13        | Prof. Mehmood Guznavi<br>Peace Promoter (Muslim)                                                     |
| 14        | Ms. Naureen Akhtar<br>Peace Promoter (Christian)                                                     |
| 15        | Maulana Abdul Khabir Azad<br>Peace Promoter (Muslim)                                                 |
| 16        | Sohail Ahmad Raza<br>Peace Promoter (Muslim)                                                         |
| 17        | Allama Asghar Arif Chisti<br>Peace Promoter (Muslim)                                                 |
| 18        | Allama Asim Makhdoom<br>Peace Promoter (Muslim)                                                      |
| 19        | Madam Neelam Nisari<br>Peace Promoter ( Christian )                                                  |
| 20        | Asher Nazir<br>Peace Promoter (Christian)                                                            |

Distribution of Relief Goods among the Christian Families in Jaranwala by Peace Center  
Lahore, Pakistan



Fr. James Channan OP Director Peace Center Lahore organized a Relief distribution for one hundred Christian families in Jaranwala. In this distribution Fr. Pascal Paulus OP Vice Provincial Ibn-Mariam Vice Province Dominican Order Pakistan, Fr. James Channan OP Director Peace Center, Mr. Asher Nazir Executive Secretary Peace Center, Fr. Khalid Mukhtar Fr. Rashid Kamal and Bro, Sunny were present and they distributed these Relief items as Christmas gifts among the Christian families in Jaranwala.





## **Submitted by:**

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