



## United States Conference of Catholic Bishops

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March 4, 2011

The Honorable Hillary Rodham Clinton  
Secretary of State  
Department of State  
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Madam Secretary:

The March 2 daytime assassination of Pakistan's Minister of Minority Affairs Shahbaz Bhatti was a shocking and bold act that appears to signal an increase in the violence and religious intolerance that Mr. Bhatti sought to overcome throughout his career.

As Minister of Minority Affairs, Mr. Bhatti, a Catholic, had raised the profile of minorities, including Christians, arguing that their rights needed to be protected. He called for changes to Pakistan's blasphemy laws and promoted interfaith dialogue with the goal of advancing religious tolerance within the broader Pakistani society. Now, his courageous voice has been tragically silenced.

Our Conference appreciates the statements you and President Obama have made condemning Mr. Bhatti's assassination. We share your concern that the killings of Mr. Bhatti and of Punjab Governor Salman Taseer constitute an attack on human dignity and the respect every person is due, regardless of faith, class or background. As Chairman of the Committee on International Justice and Peace of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, I ask the U.S. government to urge the Pakistani government to bring the perpetrators of this crime to justice so as to curb the culture of impunity that undermines society's stability.

Upon hearing the news of Mr. Bhatti's untimely death, the Vatican issued a statement saying in part, "...our condemnation for this unspeakable act of violence, our closeness to Pakistani Christians who suffer hatred, are accompanied by an appeal that everyone may become aware of the urgent importance of defending both religious freedom and Christians who are subject to violence and persecution." We join with the Holy See in urging the United States to work in partnership with the Government of Pakistan to ensure that concrete steps are taken to protect the human rights and religious freedom of all its citizens, especially Christians and other vulnerable minorities.

Sincerely yours,

Most Reverend Howard J. Hubbard  
Bishop of Albany  
Chair, Committee on International Justice  
and Peace