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PAKISTAN Religious Liberty Partnership calls for investigation into the deaths of Shahbaz Bhatti and Salmaan Taseer

Christian Solidarity Worldwide (CSW) endorses the 'Virginia Statement on the Islamic Republic of Pakistan', released by the Religious Liberty Partnership (RLP), underlining its call for the Government of Pakistan to "establish a judicial inquiry into the murders of Shahbaz Bhatti and Salman Taseer".

The Virginia Statement has been signed by 26 RLP member organizations, including CSW, following the Partnership meeting in Virginia last month, to which Shahbaz Bhatti had been invited as the keynote speaker prior to his assassination on March 2, 2011.

The statement highlights the view that Pakistan has become "an epicenter of religious intolerance" and that "hundreds of Pakistani citizens have been killed by acts of terrorism." It goes on to call upon the international community, the worldwide church and Pakistani Diaspora to engage with the challenges facing minorities in Pakistan and to support the Pakistani government in fulfilling its human rights obligations under international law.

CSW's Chief Executive and RLP Chairman, Mervyn Thomas, said, "During his life, [Bhatti] achieved much for all religious minorities in Pakistan, and his campaign to outlaw the notorious blasphemy laws was certainly in tune with the pluralistic ideals of the country's founding father, Quaid-e-Azam, Mohammed Ali Jinnah. We hope and pray that the Pakistani authorities, the international community, and the worldwide Church will take the necessary action to ensure Shahbaz Bhatti's death will not have been in vain."

Notes to Editors:

1. The full version of the Virginia Statement on the Islamic Republic of Pakistan can be found [here](#).
2. The Religious Liberty Partnership (RLP) is a collaborative effort of Christian organizations around the world focused on religious liberty. The RLP seeks to more intentionally work together in addressing advocacy and in raising the awareness of religious liberty issues globally.

The RLP Leadership Team includes:

- Ron Boyd-MacMillan, Open Doors International, The Netherlands;
- Anne Brandner of Global Peace Initiative, Canada;
- Andy Dipper of Release International, UK;
- Daniel Hoffman, Middle East Concern;
- Linus Pfister, HMK Switzerland;
- Chairman, Mervyn Thomas, Christian Solidarity Worldwide, UK;
- Godfrey Yogarajah, Religious Liberty Commission, Sri Lanka.