



Pakistan – Researched and compiled by the Refugee Documentation Centre of Ireland on 23 February 2011

Differences between the Ahl-E-Tashe and Ahl-E-Hadees sects What are relations like between them? Would partners from these sects be free to marry, without interference from the State or society? Internal relocation possibilities for a mixed couple as above? Any reports of couples in a similar situation?

A *Global Security* document refers to Islamic sects in Pakistan as follows:

“Deobandis and Barelvis are the two major groups of Muslims in the Subcontinent apart from the Shia. Barelvi Hanafis deem Deobandis to be kaafir. Those hostile to the Barelvis deprecated them as the shrine-worshipping, the grave-worshipping, ignorant Barelvis. Much smaller sects in Pakistan include the Ahl-e-Hadees and Ahl-e-Tashee.” (Global Security (undated) *Barelvi Islam*)

In a paragraph headed “Initiate a dialogue with the religious parties and groups” a document published by the *Institute Of Peace And Conflict Studies* states:

“The madrassas in Pakistan are not a monolithic institution. The madrassas adhere to different sects - Deobandi, Brehlvi, Ahle Hadith and Ahle Tashi. For example, in Punjab alone, there are around 970 Deobandi, 1,200 Brehlvi, 100 Ahle Tashi and 170 Ahle Hadith madrassas. Each of these groups has its own curriculum and independent sources of funding.” (Institute Of Peace And Conflict Studies (September 2003) *Madrassas in Pakistan*)

A report from the Karachi-based *GEO TV* states:

“Ahle-Sunnat, Wahabi, Ahle-Tashi, and Ahle-Hadees are four main sectarian groups in Pakistan. Ahle-Sunnat is further divided into two groups; Barelwi and Deobandi. Ahle-Hadees are said to have the tendency to interpret Islam in a most intransigent way and the followers of this particular sect believe in //militancy// as well.” (GEO TV (30 September 2009) *Pakistan religious scholars deny imparting terrorist training at seminaries*)

A report from the Islamabad-based English-language newspaper *The News* states:

“While 34,253 students are affiliated with the seminaries representing the Ahle-Hadith school of thought [a school of thought among Muslims influenced by Salafist Muslims], 7,333 students are getting education from the seminaries of Ahl-e-Tashi [Shia sect] school of thought.” (The News (2 January 2006) *Pakistan: Over 400,000 students enrolled in Islamic seminaries in Punjab*)

The 2010 *United States Department of State* religious freedom report for Pakistan, in a section headed “Abuses by Rebel or Foreign Forces or Terrorist Organizations”, notes:

“Sectarian violence continued in different parts of the country during the reporting period, with attacks on the Shi'a minority, particularly in Dera Ismail Khan, Quetta, Hangu, Kohat, Tank, DG Khan, Gilgit, and Kurram and Orakzai Agencies. Throughout the reporting period, attacks, threats, and violence by Islamic extremists occurred across the country, especially in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Attacks on houses of worship, religious gatherings, and religious leaders linked to sectarian, religious extremist, and terrorist groups resulted in hundreds of deaths during the reporting period. Sectarian violence between Sunni and Shi'a extremists continued during the reporting period, and several religious minority individuals and communities were the targets of religious violence across the country.” (United States Department of State (17 November 2010) *International Religious Freedom Report 2010*)

A *BBC News* report states:

“Over the past 20 years Sunni and Shia extremists from both groups have attacked each other all over Pakistan. However analysts say that the bulk of the violence more recently has been committed by Sunni militants inspired by al-Qaeda's ideology. Their attacks have borne a startling resemblance to bombings carried out by Sunni militants against Shias in Iraq.” (BBC News (25 January 2011) *Pakistan's evolving sectarian schism*)

An *Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada* response to a request for information on Shia-Sunni inter-religious marriages in Pakistan notes:

“A professor at the Institute of Islamic Studies at McGill University who specializes in modern Islamic developments in India and Pakistan, including women's issues, stated in a 7 October 2003 telephone interview that intermarriages between Sunnis and Shias are less problematic in Pakistan than marriages between Muslims and Christians. Sunni and Shi'ite Muslims share the same faith and abide by the same five pillars of Islam. There are no rules forcing a woman to adopt her husband's particular branch of Islam. In practice, the marriage agreement between both spouses will determine whether the woman joins her husband's religious community and whether the children will grow up in that community. In general, the children born into Sunni-Shia intermarriages are normally raised within the father's sect; however, there are cases where the children are brought up in the mother's sect.” (Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada (25 May 2005) *PAK100048.E – Pakistan: The consequences of a Shia-Sunni inter-religious marriage, including the treatment of the couple and their children (October 2003 - May 2005)*)

A *Daily Times* article on parental opposition to a Shia-Sunni inter-religious marriage states:

“The claimant's attorney, advocate Raheel, said that the plaintiff's parents had filed for khula on her behalf three months ago. ‘The couple got married in court seven months ago. The claimant and the defendant are 22 and 25 years old, respectively,’ advocate Raheel said. The two had decided to get married without parental consent. They were having problems convincing their

parents due to sectarian difference: the girl belongs to a Shia family, while the boy's family is Sunni." (Daily Times (8 May 2007) 'We do not want a divorce, but her parents do')

References:

BBC News (25 January 2011) *Pakistan's evolving sectarian schism*
<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-south-asia-12278919?print=true>
(Accessed 23 February 2011)

Daily Times (8 May 2007) 'We do not want a divorce, but her parents do'
http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/print.asp?page=2007/05/08/story_8-5-2007_pg12_10
(Accessed 23 February 2011)

GEO TV (30 September 2009) *Pakistan religious scholars deny imparting terrorist training at seminaries*
<http://www.bbcmonitoringonline.com>
(Accessed 23 February 2011)
This is a subscription database

Global Security (undated) *Barelvi Islam*
<http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/intro/islam-barelvi.htm>
(Accessed 23 February 2011)

Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada (25 May 2005) *PAK100048.E – Pakistan: The consequences of a Shia-Sunni inter-religious marriage, including the treatment of the couple and their children (October 2003 - May 2005*
http://www.irb-cisr.gc.ca:8080/RIR_RDI/RIR_RDI.aspx?id=449344&l=e
(Accessed 23 February 2011)

Institute Of Peace And Conflict Studies (September 2003) *Madrassas in Pakistan*
http://www.ipcs.org/pdf_file/issue/2032153432IB11-SubaChandran-MadrassasInPak.pdf
(Accessed 23 February 2011)

The News (2 January 2006) *Pakistan: Over 400,000 students enrolled in Islamic seminaries in Punjab*
<http://www.bbcmonitoringonline.com>
(Accessed 23 February 2011)
This is a subscription database

United States Department of State (17 November 2010) *International Religious Freedom Report 2010*
<http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2010/148800.htm>
(Accessed 23 February 2011)

This response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Refugee Documentation Centre within time constraints. This response is not and does not purport to be conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim to refugee status or asylum. Please read in full all documents referred to.

Sources Consulted:

BBC Monitoring

Electronic Immigration Network

European Country of Origin Information Network

Google

Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada

Lexis Nexis

Refugee Documentation Centre Query Database

UNHCR Refworld

United States Department of State