

	CHINGARI - Coalition for Hindu Girls Abducted and their Rights	
Rakhi Israni Director, CHINGARI Project Executive Director, Legal, HinduPACT	Human Rights Advocacy Against Religious Persecution: With Vigils Across the Country the CHINGARI PROJECT is Lighting a Spark for Change	

September 27, 2021

On September 18 2021, leaders and community residents gathered in more than a dozen major cities around the world to stand in solidarity with the young Pakistani girls and their families - many between the ages of 12 and 17 - who are taken each year from their homes, raped and forcibly converted to Islam, thrown into abusive marriages with much older men, and finally forbidden to ever return to their families. According to reports by the Movement for Solidarity and Peace, 1000 young girls of minority religions, mostly Hindu and Sikh, but some also Christian, are kidnapped, sexually abused, and converted to Islam each year in Pakistan.

Led by Hindu Policy Research and Advocacy Collective (HinduPACT) religious and community organizations gathered together to silently protest the unfair treatment of these abducted girls in Pakistan across the US. This event was one of several such vigils being organized in Canada, the UK, Australia, Kenya and across the world by HinduPACT partners. These organized have pledged to highlight the plight of these innocent girls who face this worst form of oppression because of their religious beliefs.

The CHINGARI Project (Coalition for HINDu Girls Abducted and their Rights), founded in 2021 is a social justice campaign aimed towards bringing awareness to Hindus across the globe about the atrocities that young, innocent Hindu girls face in Sindh, Pakistan each day. Through informative advocacy, community outreach and research, the CHINGARI team is working towards making our local U.S. representatives aware of the unstable religious situation in Pakistan and encouraging them to take further action to convey their disapproval.

Leader Quotes:

Rakhi Israni, the Director for the CHINGARI Project said,

"Minorities in Pakistan live completely helpless lives. Over the past seven decades, the Hindu, Christian, and Sikh families in Pakistan have had their livelihoods, their property, and their basic rights stripped from them simply because of their religion, but, worse yet, many of them also have to helplessly watch as something much more valuable is violently snatched from them: their little girls. It is the duty of every decent human being everywhere to stand up and speak out against such injustice. CHINGARI hopes to spark that fire of awareness and action"

Las Vegas City Councilwoman Michele Fiore attended the silent vigil in Las Vegas held on September 18, 2021. She spoke about trafficking of women and girls in the United States and around the world. She said,

"This is a sad problem and we all need to work hard and first to stop this!"

Shreya Mishra, a high school student intern working on CHINGARI project said:

As a Hindu girl living in the United States, seeing photos and videos of innocent victims in Sindh, Pakistan makes me gravely concerned for not only their lives but also for the inaction of Hindus across the globe when it comes to this issue. As an advocate for the rights of women across the globe regardless of religion, race, or ethnicity, seeing the systematic torture, mistreatment, and utter lack of respect for these young girls is appalling and calls for immediate action from Hindus and other advocates across the globe. Young girls in Sindh, Pakistan have absolutely no voice. They have no representation, and their families do not have a chance of upward social mobility. We must become the voice for these young girls, and we must advocate for their rights in a time when no one will speak up for them. Our youth in privileged countries such as the United States must understand the severity of this human rights crisis, and act to give these young, innocent victims a chance at life.

Kiran Rajkumar, a college student and a research intern working on CHINGARI commented:

As a member of the CHINGARI movement, I was thrilled to see so many community members fight for the victims of forced conversion. This was a proud moment of unity where we were able to amplify our voices and stand up for those who cannot speak for themselves. I hope we can recreate the events of this past weekend in order to create positive change for these girls that need our help.

Ashwini Kulkarni, a representative of the Hindu Swayamsevak Sangh (HSS), attended the San Jose, CA vigil. She spoke up about the emotions she felt on hearing the stories of the Pakistani Hindu girls, she said,

"I urge the US government and my fellow citizens to take cognizance of this brutality...we are a nation built on the belief of freedom and justice for every individual, we are the torch bearers of every individual's right to life and liberty.

How can we sleep peacefully knowing that thousands of innocent girls are being denied that right everyday merely because of their faith...because they are Christians, Hindus, or Sikhs, and that we are doing nothing about it!"

At the vigil held in Las Vegas, Nevada, Gerri Schroeder, Community Director for Nevada Congresswoman Susie Lee, stated,

"Young girls are kidnapped, assaulted, and married off to older men or trafficked!" This needs Las Vegas and the world's attention!"

Sudha Jagannathan, a national team member for the Chingari Project, stated,

"I am proud to partner with HinduPACT on the CHINGARI Project. It's unacceptable to allow any country to use religion as a weapon against minority communities of Hindu, Christian, and Sikh faiths. Let's do all we can to raise awareness of this abuse when US taxpayer funds are used to fund this!"

Ajay Shah, Convenor of HinduPACT said:

You just have to watch a single video, out of dozens, on YouTube, showing poignant cries of a young teenage Hindu girl longing to go back to her parents, after being abducted and raped, and then imagine this replaying a thousand times each year to understand why CHINGARI project is so important. The images of the helpless girl are haunting, her cries are reverberating, and the world is silent. In a country that does not care for a young girl like Malala Yousafzai, life of a Hindu girl has no value. This must change. We appeal to international human rights organizations to take note of this issue.

About CHINGARI Project

Founded in 2021, The CHINGARI (Coalition for HINdu Girls Abducted and their RighTs) Project is a human rights project that seeks to highlight the plight teen age Hindu girls from Sindh, Pakistan who are abducted, raped, forcibly converted and married to men that are much older. A thousand girls, mostly Hindu and Sikh, but also some Christian face this worst form of oppression each year.

About HinduPACT USA

Hindu Policy Research and Advocacy Collective, USA - HinduPACT USA is an initiative of the World Hindu Council of America (VHPA). HinduPACT (hindupact.org) aims to bring Hindu ethos and dharmic values of unity in diversity, plurality, compassion and, mutual respect amongst religions to policy and advocacy for human rights, environmental protection, racial and gender equality, and, interfaith dialog. HinduPACT activities include voter education (hinduvote.org), CHINGARI (Coalition for HINdu Girls Abducted and their RighTs), HAHRI (Hindus Advancing Human Rights Internationally) and weekly live show on contemporary American Hindu issues The HinduLounge

About World Hindu Council of America (VHPA)

World Hindu Council of America (VHPA) is the most prominent organization of Hindus in the USA. Founded in 1970, it has chapters across the country. VHPA runs educational programs for Hindu children and youth in addition to community service (Seva) activities, and initiatives such as Hindu Mandir Executives' Conference (HMEC), Hindu Womens' Network, American Hindus Against Defamation (AHAD), Hindu Policy Research and Advocacy Collective (HinduPACT).

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Photographs from the Vigil



San Jose, CA



Las Vegas, NV with Gerri Schroeder, Community Director for Nevada Congresswoman Susie Lee



Tampa, FL



Times Square, NY



Chicago, IL



Atlanta, GA



Houston, TX



St. Paul, MN