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Senator the Hon Penny Wong
Minister for Foreign Affairs

MC24-006748

Dr Ali Alsamail
Director
The Shia Muslim Council of Australia
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22 AUG 2024

Dear Dr Alsamail

Thank you for your letter regarding the threat of further violence against Shia communities in Parachinar in Pakistan.

The Australian Government acknowledges the significant security and human rights challenges faced by Pakistan, including in Kurram and the surrounding districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province. We are deeply concerned by reports of sectarian violence and loss of life in Parachinar, and call on all parties to respect the ceasefire.

I assure you that Australia raises human rights concerns with the Government of Pakistan. Australia's High Commissioner frequently advocates on a range of human rights concerns, including protecting and promoting the right to freedom of religion and belief and fostering religious tolerance. He meets regularly with Pakistan's government and religious leaders to urge Pakistan to prevent the persecution of minorities, protect religious freedom, deepen inter-faith harmony and extend its legal human rights protections to minority groups, in line with its Constitution.

Australia also advocates for freedom of religion and belief at the UN Human Rights Council and UN General Assembly. At Pakistan's 2023 Universal Periodic Review, we noted the concerning reports of discrimination and violence towards religious minorities and encouraged Pakistan to foster religious tolerance and protect human rights of minorities.

I trust this information is of assistance.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Penny Wong', written over a horizontal line.

PENNY WONG

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