



A TALE OF TWO WOMEN



MARTHA BIBI



SHAHBAZ BHATTI
(ASSASSINATED)



ASIA BIBI



SALMAN TASEER
(ASSASSINATED)

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DEDICATION

This book is dedicated to **Trinity Church Eindhoven in the Netherlands** for their kindness, mercy and generous support ensuring my family's survival. Their help also enabled the writing of this book while we were in exile in Sri Lanka. They will always be remembered.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

My true appreciations for all human rights defenders who are being at risk and even then they speak for victims of human rights violations. And also my appreciations for those who are advocating for religious liberty.

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INTRODUCTION

BLASPHEMY LAWS-A TALE OF TWO WOMEN is a non-fiction story of two Christian women, Martha Bibi, mother of six children, and Asia Bibi (Aasiya Noreen), mother of two daughters, these two women were accused of committing blasphemy against 'Muhammad' (Prophet of Islamic Religion), the offence, whose punishment is death if the luck favors the accused to be alive from the mob justice in Pakistan. The both women are not related to each other and they were living about 115 KM away from each other. They remained unfamiliar to each other till the death conviction of Asia Bibi in 2010. A number of persons would have been involved in their cases to save them from the death, the punishment for blasphemy in Pakistan, and those too had to suffer and to be affected including two high profile political figures one the sitting Governor of Punjab, Pakistan, **Salman Taseer**, and the second Christian Minister, **Shahbaz Bhatti**, they were assassinated for advocating of these two women and asking to repeal the blasphemy laws in Pakistan ; and **Sardar Mushtaq Gill**, the human rights defender lawyer, the writer of the book, who was forced to flee from home country after surviving the attempts of his assassination due to his advocacy on behalf of blasphemy accused particularly these two women and asking to repeal of blasphemy laws. **Saif-Ul-Malook**, the Supreme Court lawyer of Asia Bibi in her second and final appeal, he was also forced to flee his country after the acquittal and release of her death convict client Asia Bibi.

Martha Bib, her husband name is Boota Masih resident of Village Kot Nanak Singh, Changha Manga, district Kasur, Punjab, was charged under blasphemy accusations, and arrested on the very night of 22nd January 2007. She had a previous dispute with a Muslim woman Yasmeen on the sermon delivered early in the morning of 22nd January 2007 by a local cleric of the Mosque against Christians and their faiths, the common practice of Muslim Clerics in Pakistan. On the same day at about 11:30 am, when Martha Bibi went to take back her construction materials, which was given to the local Mosque on rent, the Muslim woman forbade her to enter the Mosque insulting her by saying Christians are infidels and impure. She did

not allow her to enter the Mosque as the Muslim woman had a grocery shop beside the Mosque. She (Martha) asked for help from a Muslim boy of the Village and took back her construction materials to home. But the Muslim woman could not digest the success of Martha Bibi how she managed to handle the situation and succeeded to bring back her construction materials. She (Muslim woman), being jealous and furious, started to attack on her Christian faith and she used filthy words against Jesus Christ, in defense, she (Martha) dared to say we (Christians) are sons of God and our Jesus Christ ascended to heaven after the resurrection and He is alive but yours Prophet (Muhammad) died and buried where he is still lying in his grave. In the evening there was an announcement on the loud speaker of the local Mosque and a large furious mob from the Village assembled and marched toward her (Martha Bibi) home and surrounded her home. On their requests one neighbor Muslim Muhammad Rashid Mughal had got them hidden in his room and locked the room until the Police reached the place and arrested her to take Police Station under police custody and protection. Later she was shifted to Kasur District Jail after registering a blasphemy case against her on the complaint of Muhammad Dilbar, a local Muslim. She is very lucky that before the verdict of her case she was rescued from Pakistan secretly and she sought asylum in Sri Lanka and resettled in 2018 in USA along with her family.

Aasiya Noreen (commonly known Asia Bibi), her husband name is Ashiq Masih resident of a small Village Ittan Wali, district Shiekhupura, Punjab, was accused of making defamatory statements about Muhammad ((Prophet of Islamic Religion). She along with other four Muslim women were picking berries fruit in a field of a Muslim landlord as laborers. The arguments were started between Asia Bibi and other three Muslim women when she (Asia Bibi) had a quarrel with Mafia and Asma (Muslim women) on 14 June, 2009 over their refusal to drink water from the same cup which was used by her (Asia Bibi) and the Muslim women expressed hatred and resentment against her, using the term "Churi" pejorative used to describe Christians in Pakistan. The Muslim women said that Christians are impure and

infidels in defense she said we Christians are good than you (Muslims) and our Jesus is alive in Heaven after the resurrection, and yours Prophet (Muhammad) was died and still lying in his grave. After this some hot words were exchanged during the arguments, before this quarrel, they were like fast friends and working in the same field as daily wagers. Later a cleric of local Mosque Qari Muhammad Saalim (his wife was a religious teacher of the two Muslim sisters Mafia and Asma) fabricated the blasphemy case against her (Asia Bibi) on the instigation of the two Muslim sisters Mafia and Asma before this she was beaten by a mob of Muslims after Friday prayer and got arrested by Police on Friday 19 June, 2009. She was sentenced to death in 2010 and in October 2018, she was declared innocent and released from jail by Supreme Court of Pakistan. Later on the demand of TLP and other Islamic extremists groups, the review petition was filed against her acquittal which was also dismissed and finally declared innocent.

Salman Taseer, the sitting Governor of Punjab, during his governorship, he emerged as an outspoken critic of the Pakistan's blasphemy laws and consequently called for the pardon for Asia Bibi and he condemned her death sentence. On 4 January 2011, he was assassinated at the Kohsar Market in Islamabad by his own bodyguard, who had been identified as Malik Mumtaz Hussain Qadri and who disagreed with Taseer's opposition to Pakistan's blasphemy law and accused him as a blasphemer. On Monday, 29 February, 2016, the killer Mumtaz Hussain Qadri was hanged to death.

Shahbaz Bhatti, a Christian sitting Federal Minister, was assassinated on 2nd March 2011. He was on his way to work in Islamabad when unknown gunmen riddled his car with bullets. He was murdered in broad daylight because of his demand for change to the blasphemy laws – the root cause of Christians and other religious minorities' sufferings in Pakistan. He was a Pakistani politician and elected member of the National Assembly from 2008. He was the first Federal Minister for Minorities Affairs from November 2008 until his assassination on 2nd March, 2011 in Islamabad. Bhatti, a Roman Catholic, was an outspoken critic of Pakistan's

blasphemy laws and the only Christian in the Cabinet. Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan claimed responsibility for his killing and called him a blasphemer of Muhammad.

Sardar Mushtaq Gill, the writer of the book, is a human rights defender and lawyer, he is also one of the lawyers of Asia Bibi and Martha Bibi. He was forced to flee his home country after getting life threats from Tehrik-i-Labbaik Ya Rasool Allah's members. He is also an outspoken critic of Pakistan's blasphemy laws. After Mumtaz Hussain Qadri's hanging to death, he was become the main target of the supporters of Mumtaz Hussain Qadri who was hanged to death on 29th February 2016. He was also accused of blasphemy accusations and the supporters of Mumtaz Hussain Qadri called him also a blasphemer as he supported and helped to rescue the blasphemy accused Martha Bibi and Khuram Shahzad during their trials pending in the same Session Court, Lahore. The members of Tehrik-i-Labbaik Ya Rasool Allah started to accuse him of blasphemy charges and rumored against him that he and his group had uploaded blasphemous material on social media. He was forced to be self-exiled and fled to Sri Lanka in August 2016 to save himself and his family where he sought asylum with UNHCR and he was accepted as a refugee in 2018.

Blasphemy Laws and Religious Liberty: Practically in Pakistan, there is no religious liberty and freedom, the one so called religious liberty, which is mentioned in the books, has been restricted by a deadly weapon 'Blasphemy laws' - the root cause of Christians and other religious minorities' sufferings in Pakistan, which is given in the hands of Islamists who are in majority and can attack the one who tries to enjoy it (religious liberty). Pakistan violates religious freedom and ramping up pressure over its treatment of minorities through Islamists who use blasphemy laws as a tool of persecution. In the presence of blasphemy laws the individuals continue to face harassment, arrests or even death for simply living their lives in accordance with their own beliefs. The writer of the book is an ardent campaigner and an advocate of religious freedom and liberty. He is working for religious liberty for all human being. He was one of the leading lawyers of the Christian couple accused of blasphemy, husband and wife Shama and Shahzad, who were burned alive after

being beaten, tortured and their legs were broken by a hundreds charged mob of Islamists. He was threatened to be killed and later he was attacked in this case. He was threatened to be killed by the supporters of Mumtaz Hussain Qadri in this regard on 4th January 2017, one of Mumtaz Hussain Qadri's supporters, threatened him to kill via face book messages declaring himself as another Mumtaz Qadri. The supporters and followers of Mumtaz Hussain Qadri had filed false complaints in Police Stations that he and other members of his organization LEAD-Legal Evangelical Association Development-www.leadfamily.blogspot.com were uploading blasphemous contents on social media and they spread rumors in the area against them that they are blasphemers of Islam which endangered their own lives in Pakistan.

It is the obligation of the writer of the book to pen the miseries of blasphemy laws due to which Christian community as a whole is suffering and has suffered more than any other community of Pakistan because he has experienced of Christian persecution in Pakistan. History is witnessed how Christian community collectively is the victim in revenge of any blasphemy occurrence happened or fabricated by a Muslim against a Christian. It is not only accidently being happened, but also it is preplanned to be made it happened in the name of so called blasphemy laws in Pakistan against religious minorities particularly Christians who are as a whole victim of this draconian law. The main purpose and object of these blasphemy laws is only to restrict individual to practice his own faith else nothing.

Through this non-fiction story of two Christian women and their advocates, it is tried to be highlighted how blasphemy laws have ruined theirs and their relatives' lives including those who dared to defend and to advocate them. The main object of this book is to shed light on the human rights violations in Pakistan particularly the right of religious freedom and liberty which is restricted to practice and to enjoy by the Islamic blasphemy laws-the root cause of Christians and other religious minorities' sufferings in Pakistan and why they should be repealed to protect religious minorities. This is a true story of two Christian ladies victims of blasphemy

laws and their advocates how these women were saved and rescued from Pakistan after a long sufferings in jail.

LEAD's appeal to be its partner to strengthen its voice and work for the persecuted around the globe and to fulfil the message of the Bible says in this part so that its work for persecuted could be effective: ***“Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves, for the rights of all who are destitute. Speak up and judge fairly; defend the rights of the poor and needy.” -Proverbs 31:8-9***

SARDAR MUSHTAQ GILL

31th January 2019

ADVOCATE HIGH COURT

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Message and Appeal of the writer of The Book



Through this non-fiction story, the two things must be pondered, the one is about blasphemy victims' sufferings and the other thing is why blasphemy laws must be repealed. It is one of the efforts, like a drop of water in sea, to make aware the world how in the face of rising trend of Pakistani citizens getting ensnared by the blasphemy law, I call for considerate defenders, human rights and religious freedom, need to step forward and administer a long term care and assistance in order to ensure their (blasphemy laws victims) survival and religious liberty for all in the zealot Islamic society of Pakistan. In this regard, it has been urged that all those who are of earnestly seeking to defend the marginalized section of Pakistani society from the noose of blasphemy laws should push on as there are many who

are in need of a long term assistance and protection. It is the fact that for their survival a long term assistance is needed to be provided for their rescue mission if the right of life to be assured for the blasphemy victims and for this the committed defenders come forward for their defense to make it possible.

I, Sardar Mushtaq Gill, the writer of the book and human rights defender lawyer, head of a Christian advocacy group LEAD-Legal Evangelical Association Development, want to explain that a surefire peril is accompanied by the blasphemy accusations. I know of many instances when there were remarkable situations when the threats were on the higher side, for example, I refer to the blasphemy law related assassinations of two high profile political figures, one of them was a Christian. Extrajudicial killings or self-exile of the accused, their defense lawyers and the judges is not a foreign phenomenon in the country. I also want to clarify as I myself imperil as a defense counsel and advocate of the blasphemy respondents. I have been attacked several times, harassed, intimidated; the Islamic extremists did not even spare my family. I assure you one thing this is the thing which prevents one to go all out mentally and physically, but in the face of the jeopardy one has to carry on with perseverance and defends the victims from mostly fabricated blasphemy accusations.

I ask you to stand with the mission of advocacy for to repeal blasphemy laws in Pakistan- the root cause of Christians suffering as a whole in Pakistan. This is such a gadget which snatches religious freedom and liberty of individuals. I request and plead all human rights organizations, Churches and individuals defenders of faith to stand and to raise your voice and to pray for the victims and their defenders because without prayers we do nothing to assist them in the time of need and their sufferings. I appeal to take a copy of this book and contribute in the mission of helping Persecuted Christians in Pakistan.

Martha Bibi and Her Family

Martha Bibi (born c.1961), a devoted Christian woman, was living in a small village, Kot Nanak Singh, near Changha Manga. The village was dominated by the majority of Wahhabi Sect of Islam. It is said that people of this sect of Islam are “fundamentalist” but they also claim that Prophet Muhammad is dead and lying in his grave and there is no need to ask him during prayers. There were only eight families of Christians who were laborers and mostly depended upon the Muslim landowners of the village. There was no Church in this village. Some Pastors visited these families occasionally and taught them Gospel of Jesus Christ. They had to go neighboring places for prayer and worship mostly on Christmas and Easter days. They also wished to have their own Church building in this village but their wish was unfulfilled.

She was very hard working lady. She has three sons and three daughters. Her children were studying in local government schools before the registration of blasphemy case. Her husband by profession was a mason besides this masonry work he was doing his own business of supplying construction materials and bricks to big contractors of constructing buildings. In this way, they were considered well established Christian family of the village and they had managed to buy a big and costly piece of land for their own residence in the same village later where they had constructed a good home for their own residence.

Some of Muslims of the village started to feel jealousy of her husband’s business and forced him to take them as partners in his business of bricks supplier. Her husband, Boota Masih, was become worried on their demand and finally he refused and declined their proposal of business partnership in his brick supplying business. In this way they started to develop a grudge in their hearts against him which turned into hatred and enmity.

Martha was well known among the both Christian and Muslim ladies of the village due to her active role in her husband’s business of supplying construction materials on rent which expanded too quickly to other neighboring villages. She was not well

educated but she could read and recite Holy Bible. She was very pious and said her prayers regularly at her home. She often helped the women of the village by giving them a small debt as a loan if someone came and asked. She was living a very happy and luxury life in the village comparatively to other Christian families of the village. She was very happy and contented.

She had no concern who was heading the country and what was happening in the country and what was the politics of the country. She even did not know what the laws in the country were. She did not bother if someone called her as infidel or impure. She also did not care if Muslims expressed hatred and resentment against her, using the term "Churi" pejorative used to describe Christians in Pakistan. Because of Gospel message, she knew people would hate Christians due to their faith in Christ and she had strong faith in Jesus Christ. She believed there was only name who could give her salvation and eternal life and that is 'Jesus Christ'.

Her mother in law, Bashiran Bibi, a very old lady, often guided and instructed her to be careful from Muslim women they could be dangerous at any moment but she declined to accept her instructions by saying nothing would be happened. Bashiran Bibi, old woman, had experienced that Muslims could be dangerous as they were not good concerning to faith related issues. She knew they did not teach love and peace because they are in majority and in power. She had common apprehensions of fear from Muslims which every Christian in Pakistan has in his mind and heart about them. She also did not know that there were such laws (blasphemy laws) which could be so dangerous for their lives and property till they themselves became the victims by those laws.

The time made fraud with Martha Bibi and destroyed her happy and luxury life and turned into the life of full of sorrows and miseries. But she was still hopeful and strong in Christian faith and said time could do nothing with her as she believes in Jesus Christ, Who is her Shepherd.

Asia Bibi and Her Family

Aasiya Noreen (born c. 1971; better known as Asia Bibi). She has two daughters. Her husband name is Ashiq Masih. She was residing at a small village Ittan Wali near Shiekhupura, Punjab with her husband and children after her husband's retirement from army where he was employed as a sweeper. After retirement he established his own business with his retirement money. He bought a van for public transport and later became a rickshaw driver when his transport business was flopped. She helped her husband and started to work as a laborer at fields along with other women of the village. She was living happily with her family in the village. Her father, Soran Masih, was also living in the same village and doing a brick making work at a nearby brick kiln factory. She and her family was very poor and it was difficult for them to make ends to meet. He often went to see her daughter at her home and he became happy to see and meet them. It was the whole world for him.

Asia Bibi had good friendship with other Muslim women of the village. Her friends, a number of times, mocked her to forsake Christian faith and proposed to accept Islam. She never showed her annoyance of their mockery and proposal but declined their proposal by saying she was good with her Christian faith. She worked with her Muslims colleague laborers at different fields of the village. She was very happy with her life and enjoying it despite the fact that they were very poor. She was a contented and a devoted Christian lady who did not care that majority of Muslims had hatred against Christians due to their Christian faith.

She had two Muslim friends who worked along with her in fields as daily wages, they were Mafia Bibi and Asma Bibi, the both were real sisters, and they got their Islamic studies and teachings from a local cleric's wife. These two Muslim sisters learnt from her Islamic teacher to invite every non-Muslim to accept Islam as it is a duty for all Muslims to invite non-Muslim. They often gave invitation to Asia to accept Islam sometimes they used this invitation as a threat and criticism by saying you Christian would go in hell and suffer there all times. At the end, those two

friends of Asia became the cause of her and her family's miseries and hardships which destroyed their lives and property completely. She had to face a long times sufferings.

She was very brave lady and kept practicing her Christian faith in jail where she was languishing since her arrest till her acquittal and release. She became a symbol of Christian's persecution in Pakistan. She was the witness of how blasphemy laws could destroy the life and the property of Christians in Pakistan.

She was not a missionary lady but she was being dealt by Muslims colleague laborers as a Christian missionary due to her devotional attachment with her Christian faith and teachings. Her dealing by character with other colleagues and her honesty with her work had proved her as a perfect follower of Christ and her character played a role model for other. Her persecution was also a symbol of her perfection of her faith in Christ.

She was also an inspiration of Christian faith for other who were suffering due to their Christian faith in the whole world. Christians were the most persecuted community in the world. They (Christians) became satisfied to read such testimonial stories of the persecuted Christians such as Martha Bibi and Asia Bibi.

Blasphemy Accusations

Martha Bibi woke up early in the morning and said her daily prayers with Bible reading. She started to make breakfast for her husband who was ready to go to work, in the meanwhile, a local cleric of the mosque of village Kot Nanak Singh, started to deliver a sermon and used naked abusing and filthy words against Christians and their faith, the common practice of Muslim Clerics in Pakistan. She was listening very carefully and she felt anger at the Muslim Cleric's sermon which was against Christians. She also shared with her husband and made in his notice about the Muslim Cleric's sermon but her husband consoled her by saying God would fight for us. Her husband went to work and her children also went to school after taking breakfast. Her in laws parents, were staying in other previous old house and she went to give them breakfast. After giving them breakfast, she thought to take back home her construction materials which was lying in the village Mosque and useless for mosque as there was no more construction work in the Mosque. She went to take back her construction materials which she had given on rent to the mosque of her village.

There was a grocery shop beside the Mosque which was being run by a Muslim woman Yasmeen Bibi who was daughter in law of the person who gave a call for prayer every early in the morning from loudspeaker of the village mosque. Martha Bibi greeted and informed her that she was going to take back her construction materials. She (Yasmeen) said that you (Christians) were infidels and impure and not allowed to enter mosque. Hence she let her not to enter the mosque. She (Martha) sought a help from a Muslim boy of the Village and he helped her to take back her construction materials to her home turn by turn. But the Muslim woman could not digest the success of Martha Bibi how she managed to handle the situation and succeeded to bring back her construction materials. She (Yasmeen) again started to attack on her Christian faith and used filthy words against Jesus Christ, in defense, she (Martha) dared to say we (Christians) are sons of God and our Jesus Christ ascended to heaven after the resurrection and He is alive but yours Prophet

(Muhammad) died and buried where he is still lying in his grave. In this way, a catfight cum religious fight occurred between Martha Bibi and Yasmeen Bibi.

In the evening there was an announcement on the loud speaker of the local Mosque and a large furious mob of Muslims from the Village had assembled and started to march toward her (Martha Bibi) house and surrounded it. When Martha Bibi and her family saw the gathering of Muslims of their village they decided to take refuge in their parents' house which was about 200 meters away from their own home. Martha and her husband along with six children were saying prayers in their hearts and asking Jesus to help them to save from the enraged mob. They took the path which was covered by Muslims but they continued in their prayers and Muslim gathering gave them space to walk as the Lord gave to Moses to cross the red sea. On their request one Muslim neighbor of his parents' house Muhammad Rashid Mughal had got them hidden in his room and had locked the room until the Police reached the place and later she was shifted to Police Station where also the Muslims' gathering arrived and the Police was compelled to shift her to Kasur District Jail after registering a blasphemy case F.I.R.No.33/2007 under offence 295-C Pakistan Penal Code dated 22 January 2007 against her on the pressure of Muslim gathering assembled at Police Station, Changa Manga, on the complaint of Muhammad Dilbar, a local Muslim, government employee, who was not even present at the time of occurrence, without conducting even preliminary investigation and enquiry which was mandatory to be conducted. The Police also did not mention about the dispute and fight of Muslim woman which was actual cause of the dispute.

The family of Martha Bibi was unable to sleep the whole night and had become terrified to be attacked at any moment by the enraged mob of Muslims while she was in Police custody. The very next day early in the morning, Zulifqar Masih, Cousin of Martha Bibi, went to the village to take the whole family of Martha Bibi to his own house situated at Phool Nagar (Bhai Pheru) where they took refuge and they stayed about two years. This was the start of their sufferings after the case of

blasphemy registered against Martha Bibi and she was arrested and put behind the bars.

Asia Bibi, she has two daughter and one of them is not mentally fit, she was very poor Catholic lady and she helped her husband by doing some laborer work to run the house. Her parents were also very poor and they were brick making laborers. The village, where she was living, was a Muslim dominated and no other Christian family was living except them. She was along with her husband and two daughters were living in a very small house which itself was witnessed of their poverty.

She woke up early in the morning on 14 June 2009 as a routine of her life and spent her sometime in prayer and then prepared breakfast for her husband and daughters. She was very happy for her life despite the fact that she was very poor. She along with other four Muslim women went to work of picking berries fruit in a field as she went in routine. But without apprehending that the day was the last day of her physical labor in field and she was going to languish in the place where nobody would wish to be placed and she was also unaware of her personality which was going to be shown in to the whole world. She also did not know that she was going to be declared as a symbol of Christian persecution all over the globe.

During her labor work, she felt thirsty and drank water in the same utensil which was for other fellows Muslim workers. There were two other Muslim ladies, who were also her friends and they were real sisters, they refused to drink water in the same utensil which Asia already had used. They said that she was Christian, infidel and impure, before this day, Asia Bibi fetched water for them to serve and they drank but this day was the bad day which was going to end her happy life into the long sufferings.

When the both sisters refused to drink water in the same utensil which was used by Asia Bibi and they insulted her and her faith, on this issue, the arguments were started between Asia Bibi and other three Muslim women, which ended on a quarrel among them on 14 June, 2009 over their refusal to drink water from the same cup which was used by her (Asia Bibi) and the Muslim women expressed hatred and

resentment against her, using the term "Churi" pejorative used to describe Christians in Pakistan. The Muslim women said that Christians were impure and infidels in defense she said we Christians are good than you (Muslims) and our Jesus is alive in Heaven after the resurrection and your Prophet (Muhammad) was died and still lying in his grave as dead. After this some more hot words were exchanged during the arguments, before this quarrel, they were like friends and working in the same field as daily wagers. They had no dispute except that the Muslim ladies invited and forced her often to accept Islam but she was refusing and declining continually.

Later of the day, a cleric of local Mosque Qari Muhammad Saalim fabricated the blasphemy case against her on the instigation of the Muslim ladies who fought with her during working in the field of Muslim landlord, before this, she had been tortured, beaten and insulted by an enraged mob of Muslims of the village after Friday prayer as during Friday Prayer in the Mosque of the village, it was announced that Asia Bibi had committed blasphemy of Muhammad by using derogatory comments about him (Muhammad). She was very lucky that she was alive because of the mob who wanted to kill her. She prayed in her heart, Jesus saved her from their hands, as they wanted to kill her.

The prayer of Asia Bibi was answered and someone timely informed Police and on the intervention of the Police she was saved by her arrest by Police on the same day of Friday 19 June, 2009 and she was put behind the bars. She said she was innocent. She had not committed any blasphemy and she said there was fight of among ladies but her voice was not being gone to be heard and it was ignored to be listened. The case F.I.R.No. 326/2009 under offence 295-C Pakistan Penal Code was registered against her at Saddar Police Station Nankana Sahib, Shiekhupura after the five days of the occurrence of the incident which itself showed the malice and bad intention of the police and the complainant in this case of blasphemy as the case was registered without conducting even preliminary investigation and enquiry which was mandatory to be conducted by laws.

That day of the life for Asia Bibi was unforgettable, she was beaten, tortured, insulted and scolded. The mob of Muslims was yelling at her saying, she was 'Churi', infidel and impure. She was so pitiable and helpless. She had no in mind other than Jesus, asking Jesus, help her, she was thinking about her daughters what would be happened with them who would care for them.

The case of blasphemy was registered against her, the accusations about which she did not know what it was. She was now in jail and the same night in her heart she was praying Jesus saved her from her haters who were claiming themselves as pious Muslims who just now said their Friday Prayers. They wanted to kill her to win a home in heaven. She did not know this was the start of her long time sufferings.

She had not in her mind that she was going to be uplifted by Jesus by making her a witness of persecution for her faith in Jesus name and due to being Jesus' child. At once she remembered Jesus said my child I know and I told you, you would be condemned by the people of this world due to Me (Jesus) they would hate you. She became satisfied and contented and prayed for her haters even in jail.

Her family was dispersed and nobody knew what would be happened with them. Her husband was given shelter in Lahore and her father and other family members fled from the village to other secret places. They were much worried on this situation as they did not know the solution. They knew that any Muslim any time could harm and kill them if they would come to know about them and the fear of their killing in was their minds which was a permanent tool for their pain to increase.

Judicial Trials and Tribulations

Martha Bibi was the first Christian woman who was arrested in blasphemy charges in the year of 2007. She was going to be the first woman who would be given death sentence under blasphemy accusations but her turn would be replaced with Asia Bibi who was arrested in blasphemy charges after two years of Martha Bibi's case in the year of 2009 but she was given death sentence within one year in 2010. In this way Asia Bibi became the first Christian woman who was given death sentence under blasphemy charges. The wordings of the blasphemy accusations were the same against the both Martha Bibi and Asia Bibi.

After Martha Bibi's release from jail on bail, with the help and support of a Christian lawyer Sharafat Qasim Gill, she was facing fear of death every day and particularly on the day of her presence on the hearing day in court. She prayed when she travelled to attend court hearing as she was at the target of Islamists who wanted to kill her. She said that she was in between life and death. The fear of attack was become too severe and then her case was transferred from the jurisdiction of District Kasur to District Lahore so that the target of her killing by her village's Islamist extremists be less in approach.

She was staying at Bhai Pheru (New name Phool Nagar) after her release on bail in the home of Sardar Mushtaq Gill, along with her family, then a separate house was arranged for them to live very close in the same area on rent. In this way they spent almost 18 months in this town of Bhai Pheru. The news spread in the area about Martha Bibi blasphemy case and her defamatory remarks about Muhammad 'Prophet of Islamists', then the neighboring Muslims of the town started to discuss about her case and her staying in this area.

In the meanwhile, one of her sons Ghaffar had developed a love affair with a neighbor Muslim girl. One night she (Muslim girl) secretly fled from her home and came to meet her lover Ghaffar, son of Martha Bibi, while she was in their house, her family started to search her. They found her in their house and they wanted to kill the family. Zulfiqar brother of Sardar Mushtaq Gill reached immediately at their

house after receiving a phone call from her husband Boota Masih. He intervened to save them from the Muslim attackers by taking risk of his own life. There were about twelve young Muslim boys started to beat and to torture Ghaffar. After beating him severely, one of them took out pistol and wanted to kill him but Zulfiqar again intervened and saved him from the attempt of his killing. Later other Christians came forward and saved the whole family of Martha Bibi and shifted them Lahore at early in the morning of the same night.

The trial of Asia Bibi's blasphemy case was in session court of Nankana Sahib and the trial of Martha Bibi's blasphemy case was in session court, Lahore. Asia Bibi was in jail and from jail she went to attend every court hearing. Martha Bibi was on bail and she went to attend every court hearing from her home. The both families of blasphemy victim ladies were suffering and shifting here to there to avoid to come in the notice of the Islamists who wanted to kill them.

Asia Bibi was facing trial of her case and the bail petition was filed on her behalf but it was bad luck for her that her petition for bail was rejected due to pressure of the Islamists. There was much pressure on this case. The local bar of the lawyers had put restrictions and also warned the lawyers of the bar to do not appear in this case on behalf of Asia Bibi. During the court hearing even the pistol was shown within court premises to the lawyers of Asia Bibi for the purpose of developing pressure on them.

Death Conviction of Asia Bibi

In the Month of November, 2010, Asia Bibi was sentenced to death by Additional and Session Judge Nankana Sahib, Muhammad Naveed Iqbal. The news of her death sentence was spread like fire all over the world. The sitting governor of Punjab went to jail to meet her and he condemned her death sentence.

The case raised an international outcry, including a plea for mercy from the pope. Hopes were raised that day of her death conviction, she would soon be pardoned, after government officials said she was innocent. Her family went into hiding after receiving death threats, some of which threatened to kill her if she would be released from prison. A very famous Muslim cleric Maulana Yousaf Qureshi announced a bounty of Pakistan Rupees.5, 00,000 to anyone who would kill her even in prison. With this verdict of the court, she became the first Christian woman condemned to death in Pakistan on blasphemy charges. Later the verdict of her death conviction was upheld by Lahore High Court, which received worldwide attention.

Many petitions for her release were created by different organizations who are aiding persecuted Christians. The Pope Benedict XVI and Pope Francis called for the blasphemy charges to be dismissed. She did not receive any sympathy from her neighbors and Islamic religious leaders in the country, some of whom adamantly called for her to be executed.

She denied that she had committed blasphemy. She said that she had been accused by her colleague laborers on trivial dispute of drinking water in the same utensil used by her. The day of her sentencing she cried and wept alone by remembering her family, putting her head in her hands. She could no longer bear the sight of people full of hatred, applauding the killing of a poor farm laborer Christian. She no longer see them, but she was still hearing them, the crowd who gave the judge a standing ovation, saying: "Kill her, kill her! Allahu Akbar!" The court house is invaded by a euphoric horde who broke down the doors, chanting: "Vengeance for the holy prophet. Allah is great!" she was then thrown like an old rubbish sack into the van. She had lost all humanity in their eyes.

The Assassinations of Salman Taseer and Shahbaz Bhatti

On 4 January 2011, one of Taseer's bodyguards, Malik Mumtaz Hussain Qadri, a constable in the Punjab Police and member of its elite force, shot him 27 times with an AK-47 assault rifle at Kohsar Market, near his home in Sector F6, Islamabad, as he was returning to his car after meeting a friend for lunch. Mumtaz Qadri was admired by majority of Muslims of Pakistan and some Muslim lawyers threw flowers on him when he appeared in court. There were slogans for him as declaring him a hero of Islam.

On March 2, 2011, Shahbaz Bhatti, a Christian Minister, was assassinated. He was on his way to work in Islamabad when unknown gunmen riddled his car with bullets before scattering pamphlets that described him as a “Christian infidel.” He was murdered in broad daylight because of his demand for change to the blasphemy Laws. He was a Pakistani politician and elected member of the National Assembly. He was the first Federal Minister for Minorities Affairs from November 2008 until his assassination on 2 March 2011 in Islamabad. At once, Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan claimed responsibility for his killing and called him a blasphemer of Muhammad. Later Mumtaz Qadri confessed the killing of Punjab Governor Salman Taseer. He justified the governor’s murder by stating that he had killed him for supporting Asia Bibi, a Christian woman whom Taseer believed had been wrongly convicted of committing blasphemy. Mumtaz Qadri was awarded death sentence by Anti-Terrorism Court (ATC) Rawalpindi Judge Syed Pervez Ali Shah on 1 October, 2011. The judge was later forced to flee the country after receiving death threats. He (Mumtaz Qadri) had filed an appeal before the court on 6 October, 2011, challenging the death sentence awarded by Anti-Terrorism Court (ATC) Rawalpindi which was rejected. On Monday, 29 February, 2016, the killer Mumtaz Qadri was hanged to death.

Rescue Mission of Martha Bibi

When Martha Bibi was arrested in January 2007, she was very fortunate who was released on bail after three months of her imprisonment from Lahore High Court with the help and support of a Christian lawyer Sharafat Qasim Gill engaged by Sardar Mushtaq Gill. Her trial was linger on till 2013. While Asia Bibi was arrested in June 2009 and she was given death sentence in November 2010. Within three months of Asia Bibi's death sentence two high profile political figures were assassinated. The one was sitting Governor and the other was sitting minister of their Government. The both were outspoken critics of the blasphemy laws and who also condemned the death sentence of Asia Bibi.

During the assassination Salman and Shahbaz, the trial of Martha Bibi was in Session Court Lahore in the year of 2011, Sardar Mushtaq Gill, the cousin of Martha Bibi, stepped forward and pledged to save her from the possible death sentence after the assassination of Shahbaz Bhatti. First time in his history of working as a human rights defender, he started to use email campaign to find someone who could help him to rescue Martha Bibi from Pakistan secretly. Within three months, he became successful to find some supporters from Canada. In the meanwhile, some other groups from USA, Australian and from Pakistan got involved in this rescue mission of Martha Bibi. In this rescue Mission, there was also a diplomat support of Canada, USA and UNHCR Pakistan office, who provided assistance in the form of guidance. They said they could not issue directly visa for Martha Bibi as there was a criminal case pending in court against her in Pakistan.

At last in the month of September, 2011, she was rescued from Pakistan to Sri Lanka. The day of her fleeing from Pakistan her whole family members and relatives were gathered at Bhai Pheru to say goodbye her. As soon as she stepped out from the house her Aunt, who was also real aunt of Sardar Mushtaq Gill, was heart attacked and died at the spot. But the mission was not abandoned and stopped.

Finally she safely landed in Sri Lanka holding in her heart the grief of her aunt's sudden death, unluckily some adversary powers started to work and she was made compelled to go back the country of her persecution where she was going to face possible death awaiting for her.

Now again she had to face trial of her case proceedings in session court Lahore, in the meanwhile, there was also one another blasphemy case of Christian man Khuram Masih, who was arrested in a blasphemy case under the false accusation of burning Quranic pages.

The case trials of Martha Bibi and Khuram Shahzad (he was also released on bail after ten months of imprisonment) were pending in the same court of Judge Sayed Ali Imran, additional and session judge, Lahore. The lawyers of complainants in the both cases were also same from the Muslim group called Khatam-e-Nabuwat Lawyers Forum 'Finality of Prophethood Lawyers Forum' heading by a Muslim lawyer Chaudhary Ghulam Mustafa. This group of lawyers put a lot of pressure on the judge Sayed Ali Imran to sentence death to Martha Bibi and the judge started to give short hearings of less than one week so that he could decide the case before the summer holidays of 2013.

In March 2013, Sardar Mushtaq Gill, again came forward to save Martha Bibi from the possible death sentence, on her request, which was possible to be given before the month of July 2013. Due to non-availability of funds, he requested Farrukh Saif Harry, the partner of the one Rescue Christians an organization based in USA, for the relocation of Martha Bibi and her whole family. Farrukh Saif Harry accepted his request and he relocated Martha Bibi, her husband and her one daughter (three family members) to Sri Lanka where they applied asylum with UNHCR in the month of June 2013.

After this Khuram Shahzad also fled from Lahore to undisclosed place for his protection. In this way two accused of blasphemy laws were disappeared from the same court and judge during the pendency of their trials. When Chaudhary Ghulam Mustafa, prosecution lawyer in these two blasphemy cases, head of Khatam-e-

Nabuwat Lawyers Forum came to know about their, Martha Bibi and Khuram Shahzad, disappearing from the Court, he became very furious at the court and towards Sardar Mushtaq Gill and his team as they had their office for siting opposite to the office of siting of Khatam-e-Nabuwat Lawyers Forum. After this with a plan, some religious extremists took steps to kill him in revenge of his support for his cousin blasphemy accused Martha and his client Khuram Shahzad.

One day some heated arguments were exchanged between Sardar Mushtaq Gill and one of the lawyers of Khatam-e-Nabuwat Lawyers Forum. During this disputed arguments the lawyer of Khatam-e-Nabuwat Lawyers Forum threatened Sardar Mushtaq Gill for dire consequences, and later Chaudhary Ghulam Murtza one of lawyer of Khatam-e-Nabuwat Lawyers Forum had complained in Police Station against him and his team to charge in blasphemy case and the charges of harboring blasphemy accused Martha Bibi and Khuram Shahzad. He accused that Sardar Mushtaq Gill and his team was defaming Islam and Muslims by uploading material against Islam on social media internet.

First Appeal of Asia Bibi

The temperature of the Islamists was on high as the trial of Mumtaz Hussain Qadri, the killer of Salman Taseer, was going to be decided, Sardar Mushtaq Gill also stepped forward to try to save Asia Bibi whose appeal was pending in Lahore High Court and was being delayed again and again after successfully saving Martha Bibi. He decided when Asia Bibi's husband Ashiq Masih met with him and requested for his support. He was very hopeful that as Asia Bibi's appeal was accepted, he would rescue her from Pakistan as he did for Martha Bibi. The first thing which he thought was very important that he was being as a human rights defender, its meant, he always had much concern about Asia Bibi and her release, hence he filed along with S.K.Choudry and Aric John an early hearing petition on 24th June 2014 after this petition the appeal case of Asia Bibi became possible to be heard.



On 16 October 2014, the appeal case of Asia Bibi was heard and decided by Lahore High Court during the arguments the question was raised by one of the Justices why the defense lawyer did not cross the prosecution version during trial on which S.K.Choudry the main lawyer of Asia Bibi said how he would cross the wording of accusations as being a Muslim. Unluckily, the appeal of Asia Bibi was dismissed and rejected. The verdict of her death sentence was upheld and received worldwide attention.

In blasphemy cases, the accuser can refuse to repeat the offending statement/wordings of blasphemy accusations in court, lawyers and judges can choose not to hear evidence in case it sustains the blasphemy and offends religious delicacies of all who are present in court. This means that in some cases, the accused can go through a whole trial without knowing what they are supposed to have done or said. In this way, the law is open to massive abuse. As such, it is frequently used to settle personal vendettas and to persecute minorities. Asia Bibi's alleged blasphemous accusations were supposedly made after co-laborers refused to share water that she had carried; they said it was un-clean because she was a Christian.

Passion and Profession for Persecuted

In August 2014, the wife of Sardar Mushtaq Gill, Neelam Mushtaq, received a letter from a local Post-man and she opened it to read. She became shocked to learn that the letter's contents were threatening words for her husband due to his involvement as a supporter in Asia Bibi's appeal case. There was the name of sender mention as Hafiz Mubeen Tarab before this threatening letter he, Sardar Mushtaq Gill, was attacked by firing at the very moment of entering his home resultantly one neighbor Muslim, who was standing along with his younger brother beside the door of his home, was injured by that firing of unknown attackers. It was informed to Police and police came to take note of the incident of firing at him.



In the meanwhile, Martha Bibi was accepted as a refugee by UNHCR and she struggled hard to get reunited with her children who were in Pakistan. She again requested Sardar Mushtaq Gill for his assistance, and he (Sardar Mushtaq Gill) filed a Constitutional writ Petition in the Lahore High Court on behalf of her children against FIA-Federal Investigation Agency of Pakistan, who were not allowing her children to fly from the country. The petition was accepted and ordered in their favor to fly from the country without any restriction and hurdle.

Sardar Mushtaq Gill himself with the help and support of one of his Italian friends and supporters, Rossi Filippo, arranged for their traveling documents and air tickets, and finally got them to relocate to Sri Lanka and he himself fled with them as they were illiterate and they did not know how to communicate in English to explain the purpose of their traveling. He was very happy as the first mission of Martha Bibi and her family's relocation was fulfilled and accomplished.



At the same time, Asia Bibi's father Soran Masih and other family members requested Sardar Mushtaq Gill for their visit to Asia Bibi in jail. He arranged for Asia Bibi's father and one sister's visit in jail to Asia Bibi but jail management refused to give the right of visitation. He filed a Constitution Writ Petition in Lahore High Court in August 2015 on behalf of Soran Masih, father of Asia Bibi, death convict in blasphemy law, which was accepted but Sardar Mushtaq Gill was not granted right to visit her (Asia Bibi) in jail. He became disappointed as he was a human right defender lawyer but he was denied to be given the right of visitation to Asia Bibi in jail. The words of Asia Bibi's father and her sister Rehana Bibi pressed too much him and he really felt pity for them.

"I have lost everything after happening of this incident and I have no enough resources to visit my daughter in Multan prison," said Soran Masih.

"Children are very dear to birds also and why not to me who is father but jail officials do not give access to visit my daughter Asia except her husband and children," he added.

He further stated that Ashiq Masih was forbidding us to stay away from the case and he himself deliberately skipped our names from the relatives list who could visit and see Asia Bibi in prison.

"I want to see her in prison but nobody willing to assist and to guide us how it is possible," Rehana Bibi sister of Asia Bibi said.



The blasphemy law was not a headache for Asia Bibi only, but her family also suffered from the agony followed by the ghastly episode of blasphemy tragedy and her blasphemy case was of extraordinarily sensitive nature and high-profile one. Sardar Mushtaq Gill recalled, “One day a stranger came to the Lahore Court and warned me that I might be attacked or involved in some false criminal cases or even to be killed”, “ What am I supposed to do, stop? Psalm 118 says: 'The Lord is with me, I have no fear of anything. What can man do to me?' .My other colleagues and I had been threatened and attacked several times by strangers because of our work for human rights in Pakistan. But we were not afraid. We knew that we could be killed because we supported and strengthened the campaign for the abolition of the blasphemy law. But this would not close our mouth and would not stop our work on human rights. The Lord tells us to have courage”.

On 1st April 2015, Sardar Mushtaq Gill’s Brother Pervaiz Gill was attacked and got one bullet injury. He was attacked by the same Muslims who already had attacked at Martha Bibi and beaten them when their one girl got involved in love affairs with Martha Bibi’s son Ghaffar. It was in the knowledge of those attackers that Sardar Mushtaq Gill was supporting the accused of blasphemy laws so they had developed a grudge in their hearts against Sardar Mushtaq Gill and when they forced Pervaiz Gill for compromise in a gang rape of Christians two real sisters he refused to assist them in this revenge, the Muslim attacker shot fire at him by saying you were all against Islam recalling the case of Martha Bibi to increase his hatred and grudge.

The attacker was the same family member of the Muslims who attacked Martha Bibi’s son Ghaffar and wanted to kill him, who had love affair with a Muslim girl of attacker’s uncle, the attacker was also the same person who threatened to kill Martha Bibi when it was came into his knowledge that she (Martha Bibi) was the accused of blasphemy laws. He was the person who wanted to disgrace Martha Bibi’s daughter in revenge theirs own girl who had love affair with Martha Bibi’s son.



Martha Bibi and her family Reunion in Sri Lanka

On 22 July 2015, the Supreme Court suspended Asia Bibi's death sentence for the duration of the second and final appeal process in Supreme Court and here in Sri Lanka Martha Bibi and her whole family again reunited where she was already given refugee status by UNHCR. Martha Bibi was overjoyed as after a long time they started to live a normal life without fear of attack by religious motivated Islamist extremists. They were living here a happy life as they were spending before the registration of the blasphemy case against her in her village in 2007.



After eight years of their persecution, living in hiding here and there in fear and sometime separation of their family members, it was the first day of their life, they forgot their worries and sufferings in Pakistan. Martha Bibi was very happy to see her whole family reunited and she also knew that Asia Bibi was the first woman in Pakistan to be sentenced to death for blasphemy, and would have been the first person in Pakistan to be executed for blasphemy under the current law if she would not be acquitted and released but same time she knew the first woman would be she

was if not released on bail and her trial was not linger on by different ways by her supporters lawyers particularly a Christian lawyer Ezra Shujat. She was very thankful for all who prayed for her release from jail and later for her rescue mission from Pakistan. She gave a testimony in a Church of Dehiwala, Colombo, Sri Lanka that she would be very thankful for her cousin Sardar Mushtaq Gill who did a lot of efforts to save her from possible death sentence.

Hanging of Mumtaz Qadri and the Case of Christian Couple Burned Alive

On January 25, 2016, during a rally in Lahore, the one of Islamic extremists group Fedane Khatam-e-Nabuwat, Chunian, Kasur along with others religious extremists groups chanted slogans against the execution of Mumtaz Qadri which was going to be done in the coming days.

After the hanging of the killer, Mumtaz Hussain Qadri, the Islamists supporters of Mumtaz Qadri threaten Sardar Mushtaq Gill during a rally in Bhai Pheru early in the morning on Monday, 29 February, 2016. They also used threatening slogans against him as he was also critic of blasphemy laws. Mumtaz Qadri was hailed as a hero of Islam by all religious Islamic groups. Those threats of killing could not make him coward to not defend persecuted Christians and to not raise his voice against the violation of human rights in Pakistan. He remained continue in his human rights work.

In April 2016, Sardar Mushtaq Gill was asked to give assistance as a lawyer by eyewitness family members of Shahzad and Shama, in the case of Kotradha Kishan of the Christian Couple Sajjad alias Shahzad and Shama Bibi, who were burned alive at furnace of a brick kiln after a false accusation of blasphemy. On 13 May, 2016, he along with eyewitnesses of Kotradha Kishan case first got threats to face dire consequences from the culprits accused in the court premises, and then after coming out from the court two unknown motorcyclists threatened to kill them. On 21 May, 2016, he told the Hon'able Court about all threats and dangerous circumstances of the case and also submitted an application on behalf of eyewitnesses in which he prayed for security arrangements for them and requested for speedy conclusion of the trial because of the accused still at large, were continuously giving threats of killing. Very next day, on Sunday 22 May, 2016, his parents and his one married sister were attempted to be kidnapped when they were coming back home after attending a memorial service of a relative and the kidnapper threatened his father to kill him. He became worried and perplexed but his family did not force him to stop to prosecute the case of Kotradha Kishan as they knew that

a poor innocent Christian couple was burned alive on false accusation of burning Quranic pages.



His personal persecution was not ended here. On 16 June, 2016 at about 8:30 pm, three unknown persons arrived at his home and pretended to meet to discuss a rape case, therefore, he agreed to meet them and got them seated in his living room. They started to talk about religious cases and religious issues. They also started to talk and to discuss about Asia Bibi, blasphemy case, Kotradha Kishan case, and hanging of Mumtaz Qadri etc., who killed ex-Governor Punjab, Salman Taseer, speaking in favor of Asia Bibi, death convict in blasphemy. He apologized and appealed them to stop to discuss about these religious and sensitive issues and one of them took out pistol from his shalwar (pent) and pointed at him and threatened him if he wished to kill him at the spot he could kill at once. He became terrified meanwhile someone

knocked at the door and they went away after extending warning of threats of killing to him.

Again on 24 June, 2016, after appearing in the case of Kotradha Kishan, he took his family from a memorial service of a relative at Lahore and when they were coming back home from Lahore to Phool Nagar (Bhai Pheru) a city in Punjab , Pakistan at about 8:40 pm two unknown motorcyclists pursued his car on which they were traveling and they tried to forcibly stopped the car but the driver of the car did not stop rather he drove it fast and they opened firing at the car from the back side but luckily he and his family were successful to save themselves from the firings. After this incident, he and his family went into hiding in Pakistan before being forced to flee from Pakistan secretly on 08 August, 2016 hence finally he arrived in Sri Lanka to save his and his family's lives. He sought asylum with UNHCR Colombo Office, Sri Lanka.



Blasphemy Accusations against LEAD and Life Threats

As on 22 July 2015, the Supreme Court suspended Asia Bibi's death sentence for the duration of the second and final appeal process in Supreme Court. The hearing was again rescheduled for 13 October 2016, but on that morning when it was the turn of the case "Asia Bibi against the state", one of the three members of the bench of judges of the Supreme Court of Pakistan – Iqbal Hameedur Rehman refused to be part of the bench, which led to the postponement of the hearing to an undetermined date. The Judge later resigned in a handwritten letter addressed to Mamnoon Hussain, the President of Pakistan, without stating any specific reasons for his resignation.

In the meanwhile, a criminal conspiracy was being hatched against Sardar Mushtaq Gill and his organization LEAD-Legal Evangelical Association Development to book them in blasphemy case for supporting blasphemy accused Martha Bibi and Khuram Shahzad. For the accomplishment of this purpose someone created a fake facebook account on Martha Bibi's name and started to upload anti-Islam material on it since October 2015. The religious extremists including supporters of Mumtaz Hussain Qadri, and members of Tehreek-i-Labbaik Ya Rasool Allah, had started to extend threats of killings and harassing by filing complaints in different police stations against Sardar Mushtaq Gill and other members of LEAD. They had accused them that they had hurt religious feelings and sentiments by spreading hatred and blasphemous material on social media including the allegation of harboring the blasphemy accused Martha Bibi and Khuram Shahzad by sending them abroad. They spread rumors against them in the area that they were blasphemers of Islam as they were spreading blasphemy contents on social media. Many people accused of blasphemy were killed by mobs before they even made it to trial.

Sardar Mushtaq Gill was forced to flee the country even then he was on their target and in line with this target on 04 January, 2017 at about 12:17 pm, a person namely Ali Khan, whose face book profile was showing he was from Karachi, sent

threatening messages in the inbox of the facebook of Sardar Mushtaq Gill in these words in Roman Urdu....*Bachh...beta ab teri bhi bari ane wali hai...Mumtaz Qadri hai Ek or yahan* (Translation into English word to word- to save himself...poor guy now it's your turn...Here is one another Mumtaz Qadri-he extended threats with the reference of Mumtaz Qadri who killed ex-Governor Salman and hanged to death.



When the extremist supporters of Mumtaz Hussain Qadri became unsuccessful to find, to chase and to haunt for killing of Sardar Mushtaq Gill, his other family members was being started to be harassed and threatened to be killed and booked in blasphemy charges including those who were working with his organization LEAD. In the meanwhile on 7th October 2017, he was made compelled to give public notice on internet social media that he or any member of his organization-LEAD had not uploaded any kind of anti-Islam material on their blog or on any other social media network for sake of saving the lives of his other extended family members and members of his organization. In December 2017, it was come into the knowledge of Sardar Mushtaq Gill that the conspiracy was very dangerous against him to book him in a blasphemy case when he was disclosed by someone that there was a fake facebook account on Martha Bibi's name created by unknown person and on that facebook account somebody regularly and continuously was uploading Anti-Islam material which was affecting his and his related persons' lives and properties in Pakistan.

Later in 2018, he gave all facebook related issue in the notice of UNHCR Office Colombo as at the moment he along with his family were under the protection of UNHCR. In Pakistan, the supporters of Mumtaz Qadri had not ended to chase and to haunt Sardar Mushtaq Gill and his family, they started to harass them by initiating judicial criminal proceedings and they became successful to seek court direction for registration of a blasphemy case against them on the pretext of blasphemous contents allegedly uploaded by them. Blasphemy is a hugely sensitive issue in Pakistan where the majority of Muslim population, with even unproven accusations often prompting mob violence. Anyone convicted, or even just accused, of insulting Islam, risks death at the hands of Islamist vigilantes. The laws, which carry the death penalty and long jail terms, are routinely abused with accusations levelled against innocent people in order to settle personal grudges and disputes.

Second Appeal of Asia Bibi and Islamists

Finally a long waited case of blasphemy death convict, Asia Bibi, was going to be heard by three-member bench of Supreme Court of Pakistan. On October 8, 2018, the Apex Court had heard and reserved the verdict. Firstly her appeal case was taken up by the apex court in October 2016, but the hearing was adjourned at that time because one of the judges refused to be part of the bench hearing the case. At this time the three-member bench that heard this case included Justice Asif Saeed Khosa, Justice Mazhar Alam Khan Miankhal and Chief Justice Mian Saqib Nisar who headed this bench.

At last on 31 October 2018, the Supreme Court of Pakistan acquitted Asia Bibi citing "material contradictions and inconsistent statements of the witnesses" which "cast a shadow of doubt on the prosecution's version of the facts."

The blasphemy defendants have to suffer for long time for a crime which they did not commit and the religious extremists are not ready to accept the acquittal of those innocent blasphemy accused who are acquitted after a long time sufferings. As in the blasphemy case of Asia Bibi was seen and witnessed. In the year of 2018, a historic verdict, the Supreme Court of Pakistan had acquitted Asia Bibi – a Pakistani Christian woman who was sentenced to death over blasphemy charges. Her appeal was allowed, Supreme Court ruled in Asia Bibi's appeal against death sentence.

Supreme Court's verdict said that the contradictions were sufficient enough to cast a shadow of doubt on the prosecution's version of fact. Keeping in mind the evidence produced by the prosecution against the alleged blasphemy committed by the appellant, the prosecution had categorically failed to prove its case beyond reasonable doubt.

"....this appeal is allowed. The judgments of the High Court as well as the Trial Court are reversed. Consequently, the conviction as also the sentence of death awarded to the appellant is set aside and she is acquitted of the charge. She be released from jail forthwith, if not required in any other criminal case," historic verdict said.

Following the verdict, protests erupted in several cities of Pakistan. Situation aggravated as protestors took to the streets and blocked roads. Chief Justice while commenting on the situation, commented saying that how could the court punish someone in the absence of proofs.

The sitting Prime Minister of Pakistan Imran Khan was compelled to address the nation amidst nationwide protests against Asia Bibi's acquittal. In a landmark decision the Supreme Court of Pakistan had acquitted Christian Woman Asia Bibi of blasphemy charges thus cancelling her death sentence. The decision was met with heightened anger and annoyance by religious groups, who staged protests in several cities of Pakistan.

In his speech Pakistani Premier said: "I am here only because a Supreme Court verdict was announced today. The way a small section reacted to it and the language that they used, I am forced to address you".

"The decision of the judges is according to the constitution and Pakistan's constitution is according to the teachings of Islam," Prime Minister of Pakistan Imran Khan said referring to Asia Bibi's acquittal by the Supreme Court. "Saying that the judges of the Supreme Court are 'Wajib ul Qatl' {Right to be killed} and that the army chief is a 'non-Muslim', and calling for a revolt against the chief justice and army chief... This is unacceptable," he asserted.

"How can a government or a country be run when individuals stand up and call for the execution of judges," he asked while talking in context of threats to judges who acquitted Asia Bibi. "Only enemies of the state call for execution of judges and rebellion against the army chief."

Prime Minister said that the nation must not pay heed to these elements, as he warned the agitators not to hurt the country and clash with the state for the sake of their own political benefit and vote bank. "If you do this, the state will fulfill its responsibility," he warned. But after this speech, the government had appeased Islamic persecutors groups in the case of Asia Bibi by giving them favor to Tehreek-i-Labbaik Pakistan (TLP) by reaching terms to conclude the latter's nationwide

protests, with the government making the concession to "initiate the legal process" to place Asia Bibi's name on the exit control list (ECL).

The family of Asia Bibi, the Christian woman who spent eight years on death row in Pakistan for blasphemy before being acquitted in October, 2018, claimed they were being hunted by extremists going house to house with their photographs to try to track them down. They had been in hiding since her acquittal by the Supreme Court of Pakistan. She was in protective custody as part of a deal between the government and a hardline Islamic party, under which violent protests were called off while a review of the court ruling was undertaken. Her lawyer, relatives and supporters had appealed for the family to be given asylum in a European or North American country. Several countries had indicated their willingness to offer a home, but nothing concrete had emerged immediately. As part of the deal, proceedings would begin to bar Asia Bibi from leaving the country. The government would also not prevent protesters legally challenging the Supreme Court decision to release her. Hardliners who support Pakistan's blasphemy laws had been taking to the streets since the Supreme Court of Pakistan accepted her appeal and ordered her release, which was the vivid picture of using blasphemy laws to persecute Christians in Pakistan.

The Mission of Saving Two Christian Women Accomplished

UNHCR Colombo, Sri Lanka arranged the relocation of Martha Bibi and her family to fly to USA for permanent residency for their permanent protection after accepting them as refugees. Before October, 2018, she fled to USA along with her family. Sardar Mushtaq Gill and his family were also granted refugee status on 23rd October, 2018 by UNHCR Sri Lanka, Colombo Office. On 31 October 2018, the Supreme Court of Pakistan acquitted Asia Bibi citing "material contradictions and inconsistent statements of the witnesses" which "cast a shadow of doubt on the prosecution's version of the facts." The decision sparked protests headed by Tehreek-i-Labbaik Pakistan (TLP) in major cities of the country, Pakistan.

The half mission of Sardar Mushtaq Gill's life, which he pledged to take challenge as of being human rights defender, was fulfilled and accomplished of saving Martha Bibi and Asia Bibi from the death penalty and their families' permanent protection as a part of his advocacy for Asia Bibi. The half mission is yet to be worked on more diligently and bravely to campaign of repeal the blasphemy laws in Pakistan. Many were involved in this mission of saving two Christian women accused and arrested in blasphemy who took risk of their lives and some of them killed and some of them fled the country to save themselves from Islamists.

On 2 November 2018 however, the Government of Pakistan signed an agreement with the Tehreek-e-Labbaik political party (TLP), which had lead the protests; this agreement had barred Asia Bibi from leaving the country. This agreement between the Government of Pakistan and Tehreek-e-Labbaik had led to "allegations that the government is capitulating to extremists". The governments of Italy, Canada, and other Western countries, were currently working to help Asia Bibi to leave Pakistan. On 7 November 2018, Asia Bibi was released from the Jail for Women in Multan. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs had denied that she had left the country and said that she remained in Pakistan. But it was sure that now she was safe.

The blasphemy law in Pakistan has resulted in the extrajudicial killings, incited by accusations, many people, had been blamed for dozens of communal attacks that

had taken place against religious minorities on the pretext of blasphemy, and had been used by individuals as a tool for revenge against other people. Asia Bibi was the first woman in Pakistan to be sentenced to death for blasphemy, and would have been the first person in Pakistan to be executed for blasphemy under the current law by taking place of Martha Bibi. But with Lord's favor and many individuals advocacy the both Christian women Martha Bibi and Asia Bibi were rescued and safe after going through a lot of sufferings.

On Tuesday 29th January 2019, the Supreme Court of Pakistan dismissed a review petition challenging the top court's decision to acquit Asia Bibi, a labor Christian woman enmeshed in a years-long blasphemy row.

A three-member bench headed by Chief Justice Asif Saeed Khosa and comprising Justice Qazi Faez Isa and Justice Mazhar Alam Miankhel tossed out the petition against their decision last October to free Asia Bibi from death row, where she languished for more than eight years.

"Based on merit, this review petition is dismissed," Chief Justice Khosa told a hearing at the apex court, which overturned Asia Bibi's death sentence for blasphemy last year in October.

The petition had been filed by Qari Muhammad Saalim through his lawyer Ghulam Mustafa Chaudhry, who presented his arguments before the bench and demanded that a larger bench comprising Islamic scholars be constituted to hear the petition. It had also sought to put her name on the Exit Control List till a final decision on the review petition was made.

The petition had argued that Bibi confessed to her crimes during investigation, and that a delay in lodging the First Information Report did not imply that the defendant was not guilty of the crime. The dismissal of the petition has lifted the last legal hurdle in the years-long blasphemy case and potentially paved the way for the Christian mother to leave the country.

In their acquittal, the judges ruled that the Muslim cleric accusing Bibi of blasphemy had not witnessed the incident himself. Instead, Salaam based his legal complaint

on the testimony of two sisters, and all gave “inconsistent statements” that “cast a shadow of doubt” on the prosecution’s version of the facts. The alleged blasphemy occurred during a dispute between Bibi and the women she worked alongside while picking berries fruit in their village.

Asia Bibi's conviction was overturned by Pakistan’s highest court on October 31, 2018 in a landmark decision, but she had remained in prison as the government negotiated with protesters from religious groups — led by the Tehreek-e-Labaik Pakistan (TLP) — who blockaded major cities and demanded her immediate execution.

On November 2, 2018, the government had agreed in a deal with the protesters to follow due process to impose a travel ban on Bibi, and not to challenge the review appeal in the Supreme Court. After clearing the last legal hurdle and freeing Asia Bibi to leave the country and she may be moved to Canada after grant of permanent protection in Canada where she will have joined her daughters.

So finally the rescue mission of the both Christian women, victim of blasphemy laws, has been accomplished. Martha Bibi has been resettled in USA and Asia Bibi may be in Canada where already her daughters resettled.

According to the reports about a Press Release January 30, 2019, Congressman Ken Calvert raised his voice on behalf of Asia Bibi after receiving many constituent letters on the issue, Congressman Ken Calvert (CA-42) introduced a House Resolution (H. Res. 89) expressing support for granting asylum to Aasiya Noreen, internationally known as Asia Bibi, due to the persecution she has faced on account of her Christian beliefs.

“Asia Bibi has been persecuted, jailed and threatened for doing nothing more than being a Christian in Pakistan,” said Rep. Calvert. “The recent decision by Pakistan’s top court to overturn Asia’s death sentence and free her from jail is obviously welcome news. However, Asia continues to be in danger and is the subject of incendiary rhetoric by radical Islamist leaders. That’s why it’s essential for Congress and other defenders of religious freedom to stand up and protect her.”

IV

115TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION**H. RES. 89**

Expressing the sense of the House of Representatives that the United States should grant asylum to Aasiya Noreen, internationally known as Asia Bibi, and her immediate family, due to the persecution she has faced on account of her religion;

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

JANUARY 30, 2019

Mr. CALVERT submitted the following resolution, which was referred to the Committee on the Judiciary

RESOLUTION

Expressing the sense of the House of Representatives that the United States should grant asylum to Aasiya Noreen, internationally known as Asia Bibi, and her immediate family, due to the persecution she has faced on account of her religion;

Whereas the United States is a Nation founded on the principles of freedom of religion and freedom of speech;

Whereas the right to due process is enshrined in the United States Constitution;

Whereas Asia Bibi and her family are practicing Pakistani Catholics, a minority group in Pakistan;

Whereas, in June 2009, Asia Bibi was accused of insulting the Muslim faith in a confrontation with a neighbor and

2

drinking from a water source reserved solely for Muslim use;

Whereas, in November 2010, Asia Bibi, was sentenced to death by hanging after being convicted of blasphemy by a Pakistani District Court under Article 295-C of Pakistan's penal code;

Whereas Asia Bibi appealed her sentence, but it was upheld in October 2014 by the Lahore High Court of Appeals;

Whereas, in October 2018, the Supreme Court of Pakistan rightfully acquitted Asia Bibi due to insufficient evidence;

Whereas Asia Bibi and her family have been forced into hiding for fear of extrajudicial murder;

Whereas in Pakistan, being accused of blasphemy by either the government or a private individual, can lead to violence against the accused;

Whereas human rights violations in Pakistan include inconsistent due process, poor prison conditions, lengthy and arbitrary sentences, and lack of judicial independence; and

Whereas the United States may grant asylum to people who have been persecuted by their government on account of race, religion, nationality, membership in a social group, or political belief: Now, therefore, be it

1 *Resolved*, That the House of Representatives—

2 (1) recognizes the importance of granting asy-
3 lum to those with legitimate claims of persecution
4 for their religion, race, nationality, membership in a
5 social group, or political belief; and

-HOUSE AS IS-

3

1 (2) supports granting asylum in the United
2 States to Aasiya Noreen and her immediate family.

□

Blasphemy Laws and Christian Persecution

Blasphemy Laws is a highly controversial and sensitive issue in Pakistan, and angry mobs of Islamists have killed many people accused of insulting Islam in the Muslim-majority country Pakistan. They have also attacked, burned and looted the homes of innocent Christians of the areas. The law does not define blasphemy but stipulates that the penalty is death. Islamic groups often issue Fatwas (Islamic Decree) in this regards against individuals declaring them blasphemers and its punishment 'death'. In the case of Asia Bibi, death convict and later acquitted from the blasphemy charges from Supreme Court, Pakistan Sunni Tehrik had also issued a decree (Alamia) that anyone who would support blasphemy accused in any way should be considered blasphemer and be punished to death.



پاکستان سنی تحریک

مرکزی دفتر: پبلی منزل مہین بلازہ ہمارے اردو روڈ ہنر سول ہسپتال، کراچی

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حوالہ نمبر: () Isb

تاریخ: 11-10-2016

آسیہ مسیح کی آئینی و شرعی سزا پر عمل درآمد کیا جائے

150 علماء و مفتیان کرام نے اجتماعی شرعی اعلامیہ جاری کر دیا

قرآن و سنت کے مطابق تو جین رسالت ﷺ کی سزا صرف موت ہے: سنی تحریک علماء بورڈ

گستاخ رسول کو کسی طرح کا ریلیف فراہم کرنا شریعت کے منافی ہے: سنی تحریک علماء بورڈ

آسیہ مسیح کو بیرون ملک بھیجا یا گیا تو لاکھوں عشاقان رسول باہر نکل آئیں گے: اعلامیہ

راولپنڈی (اسلام آباد) پاکستان سنی تحریک علماء بورڈ سے وابستہ ایک سوچاگل ذہین علماء و مفتیان کرام نے تو جین رسالت کی مجرمہ آسیہ مسیح کی آئینی و شرعی سزا پر عمل درآمد کیلئے مطالبہ کر دیا۔ انہوں نے آئینی و شرعی اعلامیہ میں علماء و مفتیان کرام کا کہنا تھا کہ انہوں نے لکھا کہ آسیہ مسیح شان رسالت میں مسرت گستاخی کا ارتکاب کر کے قرآن و سنت کے مطابق مستوجب سزا پنہری بلو نے انہیں نی شیوچ روہ سپر جوڈیشن اور دیگر مجوزہ جیم کی مو جوگی میں تو جین رسالت کے مجرم کا امتزاف بھی کیا اور 19 جون 2009ء کو اس پر مقدمہ درج کیا گیا، مگر جین عدالت کی فیصلہ کے بعد اپنی پیش پیش جج نے اسے معذور ٹوہ اقبال نے 11 نومبر 2010ء کو سزا سنائی اور 2950 کے قحبہ سزائے موحد کا حکم نافذ کیا، تقریباً 6 سال کا عرصہ گزر رہا ہے کے باوجود آج تک انہی سزایں تو عمل درآمد نہیں کیا گیا لیکن عاشق رسول کو قتل داری کا ارتکاب کر آئین اور شریعت سے علاحدگی مئی، قرآن و سنت کے مطابق تو جین رسالت ﷺ کی سزا صرف اور صرف موت ہے۔ گستاخ رسول ﷺ کو کسی طرح کا ریلیف فراہم کرنا شریعت کے منافی ہے۔ پاکستان کی آئین اگر بن کر نہیں بلکہ قرآن و سنت کا ہی بن ہے، لہذا حکومت تو جین رسالت ﷺ کے مرتکب مجرموں کو سزا دینی تو جی طور پر عمل درآمد کر کے آئینی و شرعی قلعے سے بے گناہ کرنا سزا گستاخوں کیلئے ان بھر ہے۔ علماء و مفتیان کرام کا کہنا تھا کہ عمران اور عدلیہ قرآن و سنت کے مطابق فیصلے کریں تو ملک و قوم کو تمام مسائل سے چھٹکارا مل سکتا ہے، موس رسالت کے مجرموں کو معلوم ہے کہ اس کی سزا نہیں ہوتی جائیں۔ آسیہ مسیح سمیت تو جین رسالت کے کسی مجرم کو بیرون ملک بھیجوانے کی کوششیں کی گئی تو لاکھوں عشاقان رسول ﷺ حکومت کے خلاف باہر نکل آئیں گے۔ ہاؤزی ممتا زگداری سپیڈ کو چھائی دیگر صحرائوں نے 2 بیت کر دی کہ وہ ملک کو نیکو شربت بنا جائے ہیں۔ ملک اس وقت آگے موز و حال سے گزر رہا ہے، اس لیے ملک کو کسی مشکل میں ڈالنا نہیں چاہئے۔ ہمارتی جارحیت اور روہشت گردی کے خلاف جنگ میں پاکستان کے دشمنوں سے جین لکھن موس رسالت ﷺ کیلئے کسی قربانی سے دریغ نہیں کیا جائے اور عدالتوں سے سزا لیا گستا خان رسالت کو جی پھیرا دی جائیں۔ ملک میں کلام میں عقیدہ تو جین رسالت کے تمام مجرموں کا قرآن و سنت کے مطابق پیڑی مٹا کیا جائے اور علماء و مفتیان کرام میں عشق لیاقت ملی رضوی دعا۔ مجاہد الرسول شان، مصلحتی نڈ کر کے آئین کے قلعے سے بے گناہ کر کے جائیں، شرعی اعلامیہ جاری کرتے آئے علماء و مفتیان کرام میں عشق لیاقت ملی رضوی دعا۔ مجاہد الرسول شان، بیوہ ماہ و رضوی، بیوہ امداد راقی شاہ چھر دی، عشق شہب، امداد زھری، عشق کارا احمد ثوری، عشق کامران مسعود، قزاقز شیب، رشاد مدنی، علامہ ابو الظاہر مرزا مریز پاشنی، پھر وہم اجسن شاہ واہی و کیف، عشق نعیم اختر مسطفا، علامہ بلوش الرحمن، علامہ عبد الغفار شاہ و جینی، مولانا محمد رضا داہر، علامہ گلشن نسیمی، مولانا خورشید احمد راقی، عشق رشاد مسطفا، تادری، علامہ عطاء الرحمن، دیشیاں، علامہ طاہر اقبال پاشنی، قزاقز شیب، الرحمن قادری، عشق جمال الدین، مکی مولانا، نورا اللہ، اعلیٰ مولانا، تاحیر سینی، عشق عثمان بشیر، مولانا حبیب، رضوی مولانا سلطان ابراہیم، عشق آصف رشاد معصومی، علامہ مہا لہیا راکش، مولانا انور رضوی، مولانا صوفی شیخ امدانی، و دیگر کے نام شامل ہیں۔

The major Christians' persecution in Pakistan by blasphemy laws can be witnessed in history. The government had appeased Islamic persecutors groups such as in the case of Asia Bibi had been given favor to Tehreek-i-Labbaik Pakistan (TLP) by reaching terms to conclude the latter's nationwide protests, with the government making the concession to "initiate the legal process" to place Asia Bibi's name on the exit control list (ECL).


بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِیْمِ


معاهدہ برائے اختتام احتجاج ودھرنا

تحریک لبیک یار رسول اللہ (رجسٹرڈ تحریک لبیک پاکستان) اور وفاقی حکومت پاکستان و صوبائی حکومت پنجاب کے مابین 2 نومبر 2018ء بروز جمعہ درج ذیل معاہدہ طے پایا:-

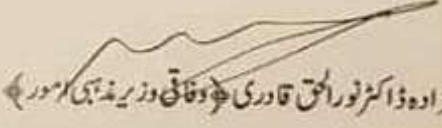
<p>1 ﴿ عامیہ مساجد کے مقدمے میں نظر ثانی کی اپیل دائر کر دی گئی ہے جو کہ مدعا علیہان کا قانونی حق و اختیار ہے۔ جس پر حکومت معترض نہ ہوگی۔</p>	<p>1 ﴿ عامیہ مساجد کے مقدمے میں نظر ثانی کی اپیل دائر کر دی گئی ہے جو کہ مدعا علیہان کا قانونی حق و اختیار ہے۔ جس پر حکومت معترض نہ ہوگی۔</p>
<p>2 ﴿ عامیہ مساجد کا نام فوری طور پر ای سی ایل (EXIT CONTROL LIST) میں شامل کرنے کیلئے قانونی کارروائی کی جائے گی۔</p>	<p>2 ﴿ عامیہ مساجد کا نام فوری طور پر ای سی ایل (EXIT CONTROL LIST) میں شامل کرنے کیلئے قانونی کارروائی کی جائے گی۔</p>
<p>3 ﴿ عامیہ مساجد کی بریت کیخلاف تحریک میں اگر کوئی شہادتیں ہوئی ہیں انکے بارے میں فوری قانونی چارہ جوئی کی جائیگی۔</p>	<p>3 ﴿ عامیہ مساجد کی بریت کیخلاف تحریک میں اگر کوئی شہادتیں ہوئی ہیں انکے بارے میں فوری قانونی چارہ جوئی کی جائیگی۔</p>
<p>4 ﴿ عامیہ مساجد کی بریت کے خلاف 30 اکتوبر اور اس کے بعد جو گرفتاریاں ہوئی ان افراد کو فوراً رہا کیا جائے گا۔</p>	<p>4 ﴿ عامیہ مساجد کی بریت کے خلاف 30 اکتوبر اور اس کے بعد جو گرفتاریاں ہوئی ان افراد کو فوراً رہا کیا جائے گا۔</p>
<p>5 ﴿ اس واقعے کے دوران جس کسی کی بلا جواز دل آزادی یا تکلیف ہوئی ہو تو تحریک لبیک معذرت خواہ ہے۔</p>	<p>5 ﴿ اس واقعے کے دوران جس کسی کی بلا جواز دل آزادی یا تکلیف ہوئی ہو تو تحریک لبیک معذرت خواہ ہے۔</p>

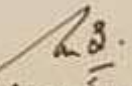
دستخط:


 میر محمد افضل قادری ﴿سرپرست اعلیٰ تحریک لبیک﴾


 محمد وحید نور ﴿مرکزی ناظم اعلیٰ تحریک لبیک﴾

دستخط:


 صاحبزادہ ڈاکٹر نور الحق قادری ﴿وفاقی وزیر مذہبی امور﴾


 رابعہ بشارت ﴿صوبائی وزیر قانون پنجاب﴾

In February 2018, at least 1000 Christian families fled a neighborhood in Lahore after an 18-year-old Christian, Patras Masih, was accused of posting a blasphemous image on Facebook related to grave of Muhammad. A mob of over 3,000 Muslims led by the Tehreek Labbaik Ya Rasool Allah and other Islamist parties gathered on Monday 19 February 2018, in response to announcements from mosques' loudspeakers, and threatened to burn down local Christians' homes. Police took Patras into custody late that night, after a day of protests. Patras lived in the Dhair neighborhood of Shahdara, a northern suburb of Lahore, where he and his family were members of Bithynia Church. The Dhair neighborhood was a home to about 2,000 Christian families, and it said at least 1000 of those families fled to stay with relatives elsewhere, fearing a repeat of previous cases when Christian neighborhoods were torched following blasphemy accusations.

The most persecuted section of the Pakistani society are Christians who are treated inhumanly in every field of life, and if the matter is concerned with the criminal proceeding then the Christian accused is insulted ,beaten and tortured mercilessly as it is the right thing to treat them inhumanly by Government Officials. The worst example is in the blasphemy case of Patras Masih, on February 24, 2018, Sajid Masih, cousin of Patras Masih, jumped from the fourth floor of the FIA-Federal Investigation Agency, Punjab Headquarters building during the investigation after he was being forced to have sex with his cousin Patras Masih. In a video statement made from his hospital bed on February 25, 2018, Sajid made horrific revelations, claiming that the FIA officials not only tortured and beaten him but also forced him into having sex with his cousin, Patras Masih. In this blasphemy case the accusation is only that Patras Masih shared on facebook a sacrilege photo of Roza Rasool, the grave of Muhammad, the Prophet of Islam.



On 4 November, 2014, it was informed by Qaiser Younas, a Court Clerk of LEAD- Legal Evangelical Association Development, who was staying with his aunt at her home very next village to Chak No.59 at the time of occurrence of the incident, a charged mob of Muslims about more than 1500 gathered from surrounding five villages after hearing the announcements from different Mosques' loudspeakers and the mob attacked a young Christian couple, Shahzad and Shama, after accusing them of desecration of Quranic pages and later burnt them alive in the brick kiln where they worked. The couple had three minor children and she was pregnant of the fourth child. We reached the scene where incident taken place at Chak No.59 near a town of district Kasur, Kot Radha Kishan, and some 60 Kilometers southwest of Lahore and

collected some facts about the brutal and inhuman killing of the Christian husband and wife which was the terrible example of mob violence against Christian accused of blasphemy and unforgettable for years.



The whole world was deeply shocked and scandalized over the lynching of the Christian couple which highlighted the need for urgent repeal of blasphemy laws that are routinely being used to persecute Christians and other minorities and to settle the personal grudges. The country's controversial blasphemy laws, put in place in 1986 under General Zia UL Haq regime, were in focus once again. In the year 2013 in March, on the pretext to blasphemy, the Muslim mob attacked Joseph Colony in Badami Bagh Lahore and set on fire more than hundred homes of Christians after Sawan Masih, a Christian resident of Joseph Colony Lahore, was accused of blasphemy on March 7, 2013, when a Muslim man Muhammad Imran accused him of derogatory remarks against Muslim's Prophet Mohammad during an argument among them when they were playing and drinking alcohol together. Before it, Rimsha Bibi, a Christian girl, was arrested in blasphemy in August, 2012

in Islamabad after a Muslim cleric accused her of burning the Quranic pages. She was held in jail before getting bail, but the cleric was later accused of fabricating evidence and the case against the girl was dropped and later the cleric too was released that focused international attention on Pakistan's harsh blasphemy laws. She got refuge in Canada with her family after spending months in hiding. The blasphemy laws are form of legalized discrimination against Christians and other religious minorities. This is a naked sword in the hands of Islamists by which the affected include individuals seen to be questioning the state-sanctioned religious doctrine, heterodox Islamic sects, Christians, and followers of traditional indigenous beliefs. The demographic breakdown of blasphemy defendants in Pakistan represents a prime example of selective application. Although Christians, Ahmadis, and Hindus make up less than six percent of the country's population, they have accounted for about half of the blasphemy defendants in Pakistan over the past four decades, according to some reported estimates. The blasphemy law was enacted by the British to protect the religious sentiments of the religious minorities in the subcontinent against the Hindu majority but here in Pakistan, the purpose is opposite, these blasphemy laws are for to persecute religious minorities and to restrict them to practice and to preach their religious faiths, in actual after the creation of Pakistan as the Muslims were no more a minority, the law should have been abolished, but it was made more stringent rather than to abolish; Section 295-A was enacted in 1927 (Pakistan Penal Code). In 1980, Section 298-A was inserted. In 1982, Section 295-B was introduced. In 1986, Section 295-C was legislated. In 1991, life imprisonment was replaced with the mandatory death penalty in the Section 295-C by the Federal Shariat Court of Pakistan.

When the blasphemy laws were not harsh and their purpose was to save the religious minorities' faith and sentiments from majority, the Muslims were tolerant towards the non-Muslim minorities, the latter remained mindful of the religious feelings of the former. As the majority grew intolerant towards the religious minorities and the

capital punishment was incorporated in the law, then the cases of blasphemy started occurring more frequently. After Jinnah's death, the ruling elite embraced the Machiavellian politics of the colonial rulers and divided the nation on religious, sectarian and ethnic basis.

The blasphemy law is an integral part of this baleful politics that has made Pakistan a deeply divided society. History is full of incidents that remind us of the great love, amity, unity, and affinity between the Muslims and the non-Muslims but after occurring of 9/11 the situation turned love to hate for Christians in Pakistan. The President of Pakistan, which was considered a strong and powerful President, General Pervaiz Musharraf, had announced for the amendment of this draconian law but later he had to back out. The higher court have not endorsed death sentence in any blasphemy case so far but the Islamic extremists have been misusing this law to harass the minorities and kill them. Even if the allegations be proved false the person leveling such charges is not be punished. Whenever such an incident takes place it harms Pakistan's image in general. Religious fanaticism is very common in Pakistan and because of absence of a political process people tend to use force and gun for settling the issues and disputes.

General Zia regime and his legacy headed by Pakistan Muslim League created an environment in which murder in the name of Islam became a legitimate act. A number of innocent people have been charged with blasphemy and killed in the name of Islam. It is a fact that no sensible and sane person can ever think of doing any such derogatory thing against other faith and religious figure. Personal enmities can clearly be seen behind in these blasphemy cases. We find personal enmities, fictitious stories, and planning behind the massacre in Shantinagar, Gojra, Sambrial and Bahmniwal and Joseph Colony, Lahore, where the victims were all and only Christians. The gory drama of murder and arson staged in Shantinagar is still alive in the memories of the local people. In Gojra, Shantinagar and Joseph Colony, Lahore the houses of Christians were set on fire, churches were demolished, hostels for boys and girls were destroyed and thousands of copies of the Holy Bible were

burnt right in the presence of the police. In Gojra innocent Christian women, children and even animals burnt alive. People have been killed and stoned to death in our country using the section of law 295-B and 295-C of Pakistan Penal Code. On 4 November 2014 a Christian husband and wife was roasted by using the section 295-B. How many houses and precious lives have been destroyed to get a house in the heavens by Islamists? The blasphemy laws were legislated and subsequently made stricter to ensure protection to the Muslim majority faith and to persecute religious minorities. But their blatant abuse has shown that even the secular mind Muslims were becoming victim of these laws. The most recent example is provided a 23-year-old, Mashal Khan, department of journalism student of Abdul Wali Khan University, Mardan, was killed and another seriously injured by an enraged mob of Muslims more than three thousand students for allegedly "publishing blasphemous contents on social media which were actually secular comments ". The incident occurred within the university premises. The campus was shut down following the incident and its hostels vacated to avoid a further mob violence. University administration officials confirmed that the mob of students had killed Mashal over allegations of 'blasphemy'. More than 20 police officers had arrived at the scene, but were unable to control the situation because there were so many students involved. Three to four thousand students were approaching and found Mashal and fired at him and started beating him. The other example of Bahawalpur when in a harrowing incident of mob justice happened; hundreds of people accused a deranged man of sacrilege, mercilessly beaten him and burnt him alive in southern Punjab and other gory murder of young Christian boy Fanish Robert in Sialkot jail. Here it also important to mention Yusuf Kizab murder in the Kot Lakhpat Jail by an Islamic activist of the banned Sipah-e-Sahaba. Yusuf had been sentenced to death under the blasphemy laws. Manzoor Masih was gunned and killed outside the District and Sessions Court after exiting a hearing in April, 1994. Salamat and Rehmat Masih got injured but survived and later they were migrated from Pakistan

after acquittal from the blasphemy charges. The worst example was the suicide of Father John Joseph on May 6, 1998. Dr. Joseph, the Bishop of Faisalabad, committed suicide in front of the Sessions Court, Sahiwal to protest against the death sentence of a Christian Ayub Masih, pronounced by the court under the blasphemy law.

The majority of Pakistan routinely used and abused blasphemy laws to harass religious minorities and vulnerable for settling their personal scores or business rivalries or just to blackmail them. State authorities detained and convicted individuals on spurious charges. Judges and magistrates, seeking to avoid confrontation with or violence from religious extremists, often continued trials indefinitely. Some Islamic extremists are using these blasphemy laws to stop and hurdle the practicing and preaching of other faiths in Pakistan than Islam. They are also using and abusing it as a threatening instrument against Christians and other religious minorities.

The worst impact of blasphemy laws on religious liberty and human rights; individuals have fabricated charges of blasphemy against others in their communities to settle petty disputes and the religious extremists have exploited blasphemy laws to justify attacks on religious minorities, thereby fostering an environment of intolerance where discrimination is effectively condoned by the state. In Pakistan, there are abundant examples of the use of blasphemy laws to crack down on some religious minorities that are deemed, deviant or heretical, offshoots of Islam.

Human Rights campaigners have long criticized the country's blasphemy laws for being unduly harsh, arguing that they are regularly exploited by Islamists to target and discriminate against religious minority groups, and misused by others to settle petty disputes or exact for their personal vengeance.

The blasphemy laws can be found in the Pakistan Penal Code (PPC), section XV, Sections 295,298 under the heading of Offences Relating to Religion. They address a number of offences, including defiling a place of worship, damaging the Holly

Quran, and what amounts to apostasy. Perpetrators face possible fines, short-term or life imprisonment, and even the death penalty; while several individuals have been sentenced to death for blasphemy, no one has yet been executed for the blasphemy. The majority of cases of blasphemy filed in Pakistan fall under Section 295-B or 295-C of the PPC. These are the most stringent provisions in section XV, and the least compatible with International Legal Standards. Though the Pakistan Penal code had always featured provisions addressing offences to religion, the Islam-specific Sections were adopted only in 1982. And the punishments for blasphemy and other religious offences were amended during the Zia administration to include the possibility of life imprisonment and the death penalty. Most of these changes were made by presidential decrees. The drift away from pluralism in Pakistan has had severe consequences for minorities and their religious freedom in general. It has created an atmosphere that encourages intolerance, violence, extremism, terrorism and the increased influence of religious extremists in the political system has compromised the ability of lower-level judges, police, and government officials to uphold pluralistic values. Unfortunately, there have been incidents of extra-judicial killing of Christians accused of blasphemy outside court compounds, inside court building and in jail by religious extremists who were never brought to justice. That's why the Islamist mobs have targeted Christians' life and property on the pretext to blasphemy laws by setting on fire hundreds of Christian homes and burning alive to Christian children, women and elderly men in different cities of Pakistan. The Police Officers who facilitated such mob attacks were promoted by the Government while the culprits walking free on streets. Former Prime Minister of Pakistan, Benazir Bhutto, and former military ruler, Pervez Musharraf, both expressed their commitment to amend the Islamic blasphemy laws and now Imran Khan the sitting Prime Minister also said to protect minorities by amending blasphemy laws, but backtracked in the face of demonstrations by religious extremists and pressure from Muslim clerics. Under

Musharraf, who ruled from 1999 to 2008, a new amendment was made police to investigate blasphemy allegations before making an arrest, but this rule is rarely observed in practice.

The right to a fair trial is an essential right in all countries which respect the rule of law. Pakistan has signed and ratified a number of international treaties including the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights yet is not upholding rights recognized by the core human rights instruments of the UN. But in the blasphemy cases the right of fair trial is violated due to external pressure of extremists and members of banned Islamic organizations. As in the case of Manzoor Masih, Justice Arif Iqbal Bhatti was assassinated in his chambers at Lahore High Court. The killer of Justice Arif Iqbal Bhatti was captured and said he killed the judge because he was on the bench that acquitted two Christian men, Salamat and Rehmat Masih in a blasphemy case.

Pakistan's blasphemy laws are incompatible with international human rights standards not only because they impose undue restrictions on freedom of expression, freedom of religion, and other human rights, but also because they are discriminatory in their effect too. Moreover, they lack the necessary safeguards against abuse, providing no clear definition of what constitutes blasphemy of Islam, weak evidentiary standards for convictions in lower courts, and there is no mens rea (criminal intention) required to prove the offence. No specific number of witnesses is required. No explicit definition of blasphemy is required. This makes it possible for the laws to be exploited to persecute minorities or exact revenge in personal disputes. The blasphemy laws have also been invoked to instigate and justify sectarian or communal conflict, with allegations of blasphemy often serving as the trigger for mob violence that has in some cases been implicitly, if not explicitly, condoned by police and government officials. Despite their harsh penalties, the blasphemy laws provide no clear guidance on which the offence constitutes a violation. This determination is left to police and judicial officials to make, often relying on their own personal beliefs and

interpretations of Islam and example and incidents happened during the time of Islamic Prophet Muhammad. As it has been argued, interpreting what falls under Pakistan's anti-blasphemy laws is essentially a theological question and, since there is no black-letter definition of the crime in the Holy Quran or other authoritative Islamic sources, it is one that remains unsettled. The vagueness of the laws lend to their utility for settling personal vendettas and targeting religious minorities at will. In addition, Pakistan's blasphemy laws fail to consistently distinguish between malicious, deliberate acts of blasphemy and unintended ones' a distinction normally provided for in criminal law. While Articles 295 and 295-A specify the criminalization of deliberate and malicious acts, or acts intended to insult the religion of any class, the other articles in section XV of the Pakistan Penal Code do not include any such language. The effects of this shortcoming in the law are apparent in the case of Anwar Kenneth, a Pakistani Christian who was arrested and charged with blasphemy in 2001 for distributing a Christian pamphlet and declaring that Prophet Muhammad was a false prophet, one of the most serious forms of blasphemy in Pakistan. Kenneth also claimed that he was a reincarnation of Jesus Christ, and that he had received revelations from God. According to a number of sources close to the case, he suffered from severe psychiatric problems. His lawyer, Saadia Khalid, reportedly requested an exam to determine whether he was mentally fit to stand trial, but the request was denied. The judge argued that Kenneth's mental status was irrelevant as he had already admitted to declaring that Muhammad was a false prophet. Khalid reportedly insisted that the allegedly blasphemous statements were not the hateful sacrilege of an infidel, but the demented ravings of a sick man. In July 2002 Kenneth was sentenced to death. It is widely believed that the draconian Blasphemy Law is used for the miscarriage of justice; it is exploited ruthlessly by Islamic fanatics to settle scores with rivals and by religio-political parties to gain political leverage over administrative apparatuses. As in the case of Asia Bibi, Tehreek-i-Labbaik Pakistan was playing

its game. Authoritative interpretations of international law since 1999 have stipulated that the death penalty should not be applicable to persons suffering from mental retardation, mental disorder, or limited mental competence. The punishments for violating Pakistan's blasphemy laws are excessively severe, giving rise to a range of possible human rights violations. As noted above, Pakistan's Federal Shariat Court ruled in 1991 that the punishment for blaspheming against the Islamic Prophet Muhammad is death and nothing else. Many defendants have been sentenced to death on blasphemy charges, and although none have yet been executed for this crime, several remain on death row and many are killed in jail.

The death penalty has not been banned by international law, but the United Nations has set important and necessary limitations on its application, reserving it only for the most serious crimes. The UN Human Rights Council has routinely interpreted, the most serious crimes to mean those offences that result in loss of life. The UN Human Rights Committee's general Comment similarly states that the committee is of the opinion that the expression of most serious crimes must be read restrictively to mean that the death penalty should be a quite exceptional measure. The UN special rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions has found that under no circumstances and for no offense is a mandatory death penalty ever compatible with international human rights law. The blasphemy laws is not fit law for death penalty in Pakistan. In the same study, the special rapporteur cited instances in which the Human Rights Council has articulated its concern those crimes carrying the death penalty are excessively vague, loosely defined, and couched in terms so broad that the imposition of the death penalty may be subject to essentially subjective criteria. Section 295-B and 295-C of the Pakistan Penal Code suffer from all of these shortcomings. And as the former special rapporteur for freedom of religion or belief has stated, applying the death penalty for blasphemy appears disproportionate and

even unacceptable.

Pakistan's blasphemy laws and their implementation in practice lead to routine violations of the right not to be held in extended arbitrary detention, as provided for in Article 9 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the ICCPR and which is also granted by the Constitution of Pakistan. It is very important to add here blasphemy laws are purposefully used to persecute people of other faiths than Islam which has been proved in many instances. Despite the 2004 amendments requiring a police investigation prior to an arrest, individuals accused of blasphemy are routinely arrested and detained without any preliminary inquiry when the accused is from Christian community. Furthermore, the lower courts issue convictions based on minimal evidence, often in the context of intimidation and threats by religious extremists. This has led to accused blasphemers spending years in jail before higher courts overturn their convictions and clear them of all charges. According to previous example of Asia Bibi, it took approximately eight years for a convicted defendant to be exonerated by the Supreme Court.

Freedom from Torture and Cruel, Inhuman, or Degrading Treatment & Right to Life and Security of the Person, Pakistan's human rights record is marred by numerous reported incidents of abuse that amount to violations of the prohibition on torture and other cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment. Individuals accused of blasphemy are not exempt from this pattern, and some have alleged that they were tortured or mistreated in detention, either by fellow inmates or by police and prison guards. Security forces have also allegedly stood by while extremist vigilantes took blasphemy accusations into their own hands. A Pakistani policeman shot and wounded a 70-year-old British man with a history of mental illness in the jail where he is on death row for blasphemy. In another incident, Hindu factory worker Jagdish Kumar was beaten to death in April 2008 by coworkers who alleged that he had made blasphemous remarks about the Islamic Prophet Muhammad. Police were summoned but did little to intervene

or protect Kumar. The three leaders of the attack were arrested not for murder, but for failing to report a case of blasphemy. Some policemen were eventually suspended for their lack of action in the incident. In July 2010, two Christian brothers accused of blasphemy were shot and killed as they were leaving a hearing at a Faisalabad court premises. They were accused of writing a pamphlet that was critical of the Islamic Prophet Muhammad, but church supporters, government officials, and others said it appeared that the men had been set up. Their deaths sparked violent clashes between Muslims and Christians in their community.

Detained blasphemy suspects face other forms of cruel, inhuman, and degrading treatment. Several have reported being held in solitary confinement, allegedly for their own safety.

Younas Masih has written about his experience as a death-row inmate convicted of blasphemy. He was held in solitary confinement, in a very small death cell in the Central Jail, a dark and dirty death cell. He remained constantly under threat of murder by Islamic inmates in jail for murder and gang rape, and by some religiously-minded prison wardens.



Khuram Shahzad said he was held in a six feet by four feet cell that reached temperatures of over 120 degrees Fahrenheit. He was tortured by police to confess the crime which he did not commit.



The prolonged detention of individuals accused of blasphemy coupled with the threat of being sentenced to death, or with an actual sentence of death, may also amount to cruel, inhuman, and degrading treatment. When the case of blasphemy surface and the accused belongs to Christian religion then there is much pressure from Islamic extremists and members of banned Muslim organizations on Police officials and no chance of true and fair investigation. This pressure is not ended here, this goes to judges and without fair trial the accused is given sentence. The same pressure on lawyers too who represent such blasphemy accused and they are attacked by those militants. In May 2014, Rashid Rehman lawyer and an activist who had complained about continually receiving death threats after he took on a controversial blasphemy case had been shot dead by gunmen who

stormed into his office. He was threatened by two lawyers and two other persons who asked him not to appear in the blasphemy case he was representing.

Pakistan has strict laws against defaming Islam, including the death penalty for blasphemy, and they are often used to settle personal disputes and vendettas. The members of banned Muslim organizations use them against other religious minority groups to stop them to preach and practice their religious faith. The extremist organizations' incitements to hate and violence have sadly turned into actions and reality have a direct bearing on the public's conduct towards minorities, particularly those accused of blasphemy. A review of major blasphemy cases over the last 40 years and interviews with the accused revealed that the law is used by zealots to suppress liberals and others who think differently. Over the years, it has become evident that the Blasphemy Law singles out non-Muslims for persecution. The Blasphemy Laws in their present form have become a source of victimization and persecution of minorities in the country. Minorities suffer all manner of humiliation through false accusations made under these laws. In the present climate of hate, intolerance and violence in Pakistan, the Blasphemy Laws have become a major tool in the hands of Islamists to settle personal scores against members of religious minorities, particularly Christians. Blasphemy excites strong emotions among parts of Pakistan's public like no other issue. Many people accused of blasphemy are killed by mobs before they even make it to trial. Pakistan's blasphemy laws foster an environment of intolerance and impunity, and lead to violations of a broad range of human rights, including the obvious rights to freedom of expression and freedom of religion, as well as freedom from arbitrary arrest and detention; the right to due process and a fair trial; freedom from torture and cruel, inhuman, and degrading treatment; and the right to life and security of the person. The country is unique in the severity of abuses arising from the application of its blasphemy laws, and in the frequency with which the laws are invoked to prosecute

individuals and justify vigilantism. The overall effect is a serious erosion of the rule of law itself, with police and courts seemingly at the mercy of Islamist extremists and other extralegal forces. Basic injustices are meted out not only to religious minorities and Muslims with dissenting views on Islam, but also to ordinary people whose personal disputes, opinions, or weaknesses make them ready fodder for the broader conflicts that trouble Pakistani society. Ultimately, though, most civil society participants in the debate on the blasphemy law believe that to ensure the fundamental human rights of all citizens, irrespective of class, caste and creed, as envisaged by Pakistan's founder, Mohammad Ali Jinnah, the current government needs to repeal the laws without further delay.



It is more than shameful for this increasingly intolerant and bigoted society that the perpetrators behind such heinous crimes are respected as heroes of Islam while the principles of justice stand paralyzed. Parliament needs to take immediate steps to save Christians and other religious minorities from an incremental breakdown of justice because of the blasphemy law while providing safeguards for the falsely accused, whose number is increasing. Continued use of the blasphemy law is odious, as long as such laws remain on the books, Pakistan will remain afflicted by abuse in the name of religion and no safety for religious minorities. In the face of rising trend of Pakistani citizens getting ensnared by the blasphemy law, it is need of time to call for considerate defenders need to step forward and administer a long term care and assistance in order to ensure their survival in the zealot Islamic society.

The Present Government of Prime Minister Imran Khan has been seeking refuge among Islamists. It is the Imran Khan's Government's surrender to religious political blackmail and first removal of Atif Mian, belong to Ahmadis community, that will keep haunting them and second the government's silence over the open threats by the Tehreek-i-Labbaik Pakistan, calling for the murder of judges if they acquit Asia Bibi, the Christian woman accused of blasphemy and whose final appeal was recently going to be heard by the Supreme Court, which was later accepted by Supreme Court.

In 2017, a Senate Special Committee on Human Rights recommended that perpetrators of false accusations of blasphemy be given the same punishment as set for those convicted for blasphemy. This recommendation was criticized by other senate members alleging that the committee wants to change the blasphemy law.

Pakistan's blasphemy laws are made to protect the sentiments of the powerful religious majority from vulnerable minorities. Once the case of Rajpal's pamphlet that spread insinuation about Muslims' perverse sexuality led to his trial for blasphemy in 1924 and subsequent acquittal in 1927. The Organized protests in Lahore demanded the removal of Justice Singh who found that the pamphlet did not cause "hatred between the classes" and opined that the law protected living persons

of religious communities, not deceased religious leaders. There was no violence and the matter ended but two years later, when Rajpal was murdered by a devotee, Ilmuddin, it was Jinnah who pleaded an unsuccessful defense for the killer in Lahore. He did not excuse the act of murder but instead, appealed for mercy for a crime of devotion.

The history was repeated when Mumtaz Hussain Qadri killed ex-sitting governor Salman Taseer, who advocated for a vulnerable Christian woman, Asia Bibi, she was wrongly condemned to death in blasphemy. At this time, it was not Jinnah who pleaded an unsuccessful defense for the killer in Lahore but it was a team of Khatam-i-Nabuwat Lawyers forum “The Movement for the Finality of the Prophethood” in Lahore. Reportedly, the organization claims to have 700 members in the province of Punjab alone, where hundreds of cases have been filed in recent years. Lawyers from the group offer their services for free, and often pack courtrooms with clerics and supporters to ensure a guilty verdict. And rather than relying on arguments about evidence, the lawyers will frame the case as decision where the honor of Islam is at stake. Since this particular group of lawyers got together, what we had seen was a mob mentality. We had often seen court rooms filled with people who really wanted a conviction. It was like theatre — we heard abusing, we heard threats, we heard religious slogans. People got very emotional in blasphemy cases in courts to pressurize the accused and their lawyers.

The group is led by Ghulam Mustafa Chaudhry, a lawyer who has made his name prosecuting blasphemy cases, and defending people who had murdered alleged blasphemers. Ghulam had been the defense lawyer for Mumtaz Qadri, who murdered the sitting governor of Punjab, after the governor spoke out in favor of reform and change of the blasphemy laws.

In court, Ghulam Mustafa Chaudhry’s defense of Qadri was based on the argument that the murder was justified because to question the blasphemy laws is in fact to commit blasphemy. His argument was formally rejected, but Qadri has become a hero to majority of Pakistani.

They did not excuse the act of murder but instead, appealed for mercy for a crime of devotion. The both killers were admired and they were being worshiped by the Islamists and they are also considered heroes of Islam.

The blasphemy defendants have to suffer for long time for a crime which they did not commit and the extremists are not ready to accept the acquittal of those innocent blasphemy accused who are acquitted after a long time sufferings. As in the blasphemy case of Asia Bibi has been seen. In the year of 2018, a historic verdict, the Supreme Court of Pakistan had acquitted Asia Bibi – a Pakistani Christian woman who was sentenced to death over blasphemy charges. Her appeal was allowed, SC ruled in Asia Bibi's appeal against death sentence.

Supreme Court's verdict says that the contradictions are sufficient enough to cast a shadow of doubt on the prosecution's version of fact. "Keeping in mind the evidence produced by the prosecution against the alleged blasphemy committed by the appellant, the prosecution has categorically failed to prove its case beyond reasonable doubt", SC verdict said.

"...this appeal is allowed. The judgments of the High Court as well as the Trial Court are reversed. Consequently, the conviction as also the sentence of death awarded to the appellant is set aside and she is acquitted of the charge. She be released from jail forthwith, if not required in any other criminal case," historic verdict said.

Apex court's three-member bench heard the case on October 8, 2018 and reserved the verdict. Her appeal case was taken up by the apex court in October 2016, but the hearing was adjourned at that time because one of the judges refused to be part of the bench hearing the case. The three-member bench that heard this case included Justice Asif Saeed Khosa, Justice Mazhar Alam Khan Miankhel and Chief Justice Mian Saqib Nisar who headed this bench.

Following the verdict, protests erupted in several cities of Pakistan. Situation aggravated as protestors took to the streets and blocked roads. Chief Justice while

commenting on the situation, commented saying that how could the court punish someone in the absence of proofs.

The sitting Prime Minister of Pakistan Imran Khan addressed the nation amidst nationwide protests against Asia Bibi's acquittal. In a landmark decision the Supreme Court of Pakistan has acquitted Christian Woman Asia Bibi of blasphemy charge thus cancelling her death sentence. The decision was met with heightened anger and annoyance by religious groups, who staged protests in several cities of Pakistan.

In his speech Pakistani Premier said: "I'm here only because a Supreme Court verdict was announced today. The way a small section reacted to it and the language that they used, I am forced to address you".

"The decision of the judges is according to the constitution and Pakistan's constitution is according to the teachings of Islam," Prime Minister of Pakistan Imran Khan said referring to Asia Bibi's acquittal by the Supreme Court. "Saying that the judges of the Supreme Court are 'Wajib ul Qatl' {Right to be killed} and that the army chief is a 'non-Muslim', and calling for a revolt against the chief justice and army chief... This is unacceptable," he asserted.

"How can a government or a country be run when individuals stand up and call for the execution of judges," he asked while talking in context of threats to judges who acquitted Asia Bibi. "Only enemies of the state call for execution of judges and rebellion against the army chief."

Prime Minister Imran Khan said that the nation must not pay heed to these elements, as he warned the agitators not to hurt the country and clash with the state for the sake of their own political benefit and vote bank. "If you do this, the state will fulfill its responsibility," he warned. But after this speech, the government has appeased Islamic persecutors groups in the case of Asia Bibi by giving them favor to Tehreek-i-Labbaik Pakistan (TLP) by reaching terms to conclude the latter's nationwide protests, with the government making the concession to "initiate the legal process" to place Asia Bibi's name on the exit control list (ECL).

The family of Asia Bibi, the Christian woman who spent eight years on death row in Pakistan for blasphemy before being acquitted in October, 2018, claimed they were being hunted by extremists going house to house with their photographs to try to track them down. They had been in hiding since her acquittal by the Supreme Court of Pakistan. She was in protective custody as part of a deal between the government and a hardline Islamic party, under which violent protests were called off while a review of the court ruling was undertaken. Her lawyer, relatives and supporters had appealed for the family to be given asylum in a European or North American country. Several countries had indicated their willingness to offer a home, but nothing concrete had emerged immediately. As part of the deal, proceedings would begin to bar Asia Bibi from leaving the country. The government would also not prevent protesters legally challenging the Supreme Court decision to release her. Hardliners who support Pakistan's blasphemy laws had been taking to the streets since the Supreme Court of Pakistan accepted her appeal and ordered her release, which is a vivid picture of using blasphemy laws to persecute Christians in Pakistan.

لیک لیک لیک یا رسول اللہ ﷺ تحریک لیک لیک یا رسول اللہ ﷺ پاکستان

(کاروان شتم نبوت لاہور تا اسلام آباد)

دفاعی حکومت اور تحریک کی مددگاری میں کے مابین طے شدہ امور درج ذیل ہیں

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- 1- حکومت منکرین شتم نبوت کی سازشوں کی روک تھام اور اسلامی شعائر کے غیر قانونی استعمال کے خلاف آئین کی نوکری عمل درآمد کے لئے دو مہینے میں متنازعہ کراہی پر سختی یا اختیارات کوئی مشاورتی کونسل تشکیل دے گی۔
- 2- توہین رسالت ﷺ کی مجرمہ آئیہ کے بارے میں عدالتی فیصلہ کی روشنی میں قانون کے مطابق عمل درآمد کیا جائے گا۔ مجرمہ آئیہ کو بیرون ملک بھجوانے کی اجازت نہیں کیسے پہلے بیجا اور غلط ہیں۔ ایسی کوئی سوچ موجود نہیں۔
- پارلیمنٹ میں استغاثہ اصلاحات کے لئے قانون میں حلف نامہ شتم نبوت ﷺ کے حوالہ سے القاب کے تبدیل کرنے کے معاملے کی مکمل تحقیق کر کے نتائج 20 روز میں قوم کے سامنے لائے جائیں گے۔ بدعتی یا سازش پائی گئی تو اس کے مرتکب افراد کو قانون کے مطابق سزا دی جائے گی۔ حکومت اس ضمن میں کی جانے والی تحقیقات کی تنصیحات کے بارے میں کراہی کو اجازت نہیں دے گی۔
- سفارتی، سیاسی و اخلاقی محاذ پر حکومت پاکستان بری مسلمانوں کی تائید و حمایت جاری رکھے گی، حکومت ترکی کے تعاون سے بری مہاجر مسلمانوں کی بحالی کے منصوبے پر عمل پیرا ہے اور اپنا موثر کردار مزید ادا کرنے کی حکومت اس ضمن میں تنصیحات عوامی سطح پر جاری کرے گی۔

شاد احمد
7/18
10/18

Why Blasphemy laws need to be repealed

We know death is a risk that comes with the playing role of the Christian Faith campaigner but we will not shirk from criticizing the Islamic blasphemy laws and calling injustice what it is. We have launched an international campaign to raise awareness about the misused and targeted use of Islamic blasphemy laws against Christians in Pakistan. The goal is to have blasphemy laws repealed in the home country, Pakistan, because they have caused too much violence and discrimination against religious minorities and particularly against Christians; and they have created a fear of insecurity and made them unsafe in Pakistan.

Pakistan Penal Code's section 295-A reads: "Whoever, with deliberate and malicious intention of outraging the religious feelings of any class of the citizens of Pakistan, by words, either spoken or written, or by visible representations insults the religion or the religious beliefs of that class, shall be punished with imprisonment of either description for a term which may extend to ten years, or with fine, or with both."

Only this section should be acceptable to be applicable for all religions in Pakistan because of its secularism nature and it applies to all faiths. The main purpose to legislate law to protect religious sentiments of public is fulfilled by this section of law.

But the law, which in 1982, President of Pakistan Zia Ul Haq, introduced an ordinance that added a section to this law. Section 295-B reads: Defiling, etc., of Holy Qur'an: "Whoever wilfully defiles, damages or desecrates a copy of the Holy Qur'an or of an extract therefrom or uses it in any derogatory manner or for any unlawful purpose shall be punishable with imprisonment for life."

Under Prime Minister of Pakistan, Muhammad Khan Jonejo, another addition to the blasphemy law was legislated in 1986. Section 295-C reads: Use of derogatory remarks, etc., in respect of the Holy Prophet (Muhammad): Whoever by words, either spoken or written, or by visible representation or by any imputation, innuendo, or insinuation, directly or indirectly, defiles the sacred name of the Holy

Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) shall be punished with death, or imprisonment for life, and shall also be liable to fine.”

It is too tough to see what new elements added which was not covered by 295-A, except that it is specifically a law that protects Islamic faith and sensibility, by increasing the punishment which is life imprisonment and death. These words “ETC” included in this law just to discourage those who possess faith other than Islamic faith. The person who has no faith in Islamic Prophet Muhammad and in his Book Quran, is considered blasphemer. So all Christians and other Non-Muslim are blasphemers in the eyes of laws and Muslims. These are the reasons we say “Save Christians and Pakistan from the blasphemy law”, “Christians are not safe in Pakistan”, Islamic blasphemy laws and religious discrimination, an attack on Christians’ future”, “Blasphemy legislation strikes minorities and their religious liberty to Islamizes the country, Pakistan.”

In the eyes of law: To constitute offence u/s 295-C Pakistan Penal Code, number of witnesses were not required and it was not necessary that such abusive language against Prophet of Islam should be made loudly in public or in meeting or some specific place, but statement of single witness that somebody had made utterance for the contempt of Prophet of Islam even inside the house was sufficient to award death penalty to such contemnor [2005 YLR 985]. If the accused is Muslim then law says-Material produced by Petitioner before High Court did not divulge the commission of an offence under the law of blasphemy by the Governor of Punjab, who was a Muslim by faith, so the question of registration of a criminal case against him did not arise. [2011PCr.LJ 973]

Now Islamic extremist groups have turned to political parties in order to achieve their goals and they defend the blasphemy law fiercely. In this way, the blasphemy law is politicized in view of the 2018 general elections and this is also why it is always be difficult for the court to set a date soon for the hearing of accused of blasphemy laws.

Blasphemy law is a real attack on the religious freedom of all those who have

contrasting opinions with regards to Islam. Both Muslims and non-Muslims are equally victims of the blasphemy law abuses; but for Muslims, it is only those who express criticism towards Islam. And, if a Christian person is accused of blasphemy, he will not be spared and his death will be sought. There is also the risk of mass punishment or revenge against the entire Christian community to which one belongs, as occurred in several tragic episodes.

When Asia Bibi's case came to prominence in 2010 after her death sentence announcement by court, three politicians – Salman Taseer, Shahbaz Bhatti and Sherry Rehman – all from the Pakistan People's Party, which was then in government and power, took up the case and called for reform in blasphemy laws. The consequences spoke for themselves. Taseer was shot dead by his bodyguard in January 2011. In March 2011, the same year, Bhatti was killed by Taliban assassins. Rehman was forced into semi-hiding. The then prime minister mothballed all reform and change in blasphemy laws, dismayed into retreat by the Islamists threats and mob violence. Salman Taseer's assassin, Mumtaz Qadri, was showered with rose petals when he arrived at the court for his murder trial. This is the evidence of the way that Islamist groups have infiltrated elements of Pakistani society, exploiting the public's strong religious sensibility and pushing it further towards intolerance. It is utmost need of time and for the protection of religious minorities particularly Christians, who are as a whole become victim of blasphemy laws, to repeal blasphemy laws in Pakistan. It is not easy task but the time will come when we will say that Pakistan has abolished blasphemy laws particularly Sections 295-B and 295-C of Pakistan Penal Code why because these two sections are not acceptable in the society and for its peace and tranquility mission being uplifting by Human Rights Defenders and these two sections of blasphemy law are the two major instruments which are attacking on the promotion of religious liberty hence they completely should be abolished if human rights should be wanted to be respected and practiced to be seen in Pakistan. Blasphemy excites strong emotions among parts of Pakistan's public like no other issue.

Recently, weeks after Asia Bibi was acquitted of the blasphemy charges following international outcry, two Christian real brothers have been sentenced to death for blasphemy in Pakistan. Additional Session judge Javed Iqbal Bosal informed them of the sentence directly in the prison for security reasons. A case has been registered against Qaiser Ayub and Amoon Ayub of Lahore in relations to accusations dating back to 2011 of posting blasphemous material against Islam on their website; however, the accused say that their website was not active since 2009. According to Qaiser, he closed his account in 2009 but one of his Muslim friends, Shahryar, somehow managed to restore the website, while ownership remained in Qaiser's name. The story goes back to 2010 when Qaiser worked at the Raja Centre, Lahore, at the international office. Qaiser is married to Amina and they have three children, while Amoon is married to Huma who is a teacher at the Cathedral School, Lahore. One day an argument broke out at Qaiser's office between his friends, when one of them made a comment about another's sister.

The aggrieved friend blamed Qaiser and warned him that it is a serious matter in Pakistan. Qaiser started to receive death threats from his friends and then went into hiding. When the situation deteriorated both brothers fled to Singapore without telling their wives, but after a month they returned to Pakistan and then Amoon told his wife the whole story. The situation was still tense, so they left again in November 2009 for Thailand, in search of security and protection, but could not stay there for too long time and in 2012 went back to Pakistan. Qaiser was informed by one of his friend that the authorities were looking for him and that he could be arrested at any time because a blasphemy case had been registered against him. On 10 November 2014, while on his way to work at the Kids Campus DHA, Amoon was arrested and told that a case had also been registered against his brother. The police asked him about his brother Qaiser and he told Amoon to stay hidden because he was accused under section 109-A PPC.

Fed up with life in Pakistan, Amoon finally decided to leave the country. On 17 November 2014, he was arrested by Immigrant Police at Lahore Airport while trying

to leave the country. Later police sent him to Jhelum District Jail charged with the same offence as his brother. Blasphemy charges tend to trigger violent reaction among Islamic radicals, who interfere with the proper operations of the court system and threaten judges. Unfortunately, because of threats from hardliners lower courts pass their responsibility to the higher court and then it takes years to prove the accused innocent. It has seen this in the recent case of Asia Bibi.

It will not be easy to repeal the law, originally introduced in British colonial times but given venom in the 1980s by the Islamic fundamentalist military dictator Zia-ul-Haq. Any attempt to change and reform the law will face popular opposition, and in parliament it is uncertain whether the votes and political will exists to carry out a major reform to repeal it. Asia Bibi's release and acquittal will not stop the injustice, which would not end until this heinous law is repealed. We know there is little prospect of repeal of the blasphemy laws given the current climate. It will take a very brave set of politicians to move forward and even get that discussion going for the repeal of the laws.