

"You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbour and hate your enemy.' But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you...."

~ Matthew 5:43-44 ESV

PAKISTAN: Christian Murdered for Defending His Sister

Sources: International Christian Concern, Christian Post, AsiaNews, ANI News

A Christian man was allegedly killed by a group of militant Muslims for defending his sister's honour. On May 23rd, Arif Masih was kidnapped, beaten, poisoned and abandoned on a street of Tariqabad village in Punjab.

Earlier in the week, two young men had dragged Arif's sister, Rehana Bibi, onto the street and stripped her naked after following her home from a local store and breaking into her house. Arif confronted and fought with the men. He then filed a police report against Muhammad Tariq and Muhammad Majid.

In response, the accused men began to threaten Arif to drop the complaint. Three days later, they went to his home, kidnapped him, and later dumped him on the street. Though he was taken to the hospital, he did not survive the inflicted injuries.

Initially, police registered Arif's death as suicide after taking statements from those allegedly responsible. It was only after a demonstration of 300 Christians that the authorities changed the cause of death to murder. Despite that change, the two men accused of Arif's murder have been released on bail.

Many local Christians are concerned that those responsible will not be held accountable due to the country's general bias against Christians. The Human Rights Commission of Pakistan has stated: "Vulnerable populations such as the poor, women, the mentally ill, (and those of) religious, racial and ethnic minorities have less resources to use and fewer people willing to help them. In Pakistan, belonging to one or more of these marginalized groups puts you at greater risk of police bias, wrongful arrest and conviction, spending life in prison or even capital punishment." For more on the persecution facing Christians in Pakistan, and to review previously posted reports, go to our [country report](#).

Prayerfully uphold Rehana and the rest of her family as they mourn the loss of their loved one. Pray that, in the midst of such severe persecution, Pakistani believers will have the wisdom and courage they need to share the message of Jesus with those who are spiritually seeking, and to repay violence with His compassionate love. May those responsible for Arif's death and the shameful mistreatment of his sister be convicted of their wrongdoings and held accountable for their actions; in hopes they will turn from their destructive ways and surrender their lives to Christ. In general, pray for a shift in the cultural and political climate in Pakistan so that all members of this nation will be treated with equity and fairness.



"Remember...those who are mistreated..." (Heb. 13:3).

Photo: AsiaNews

REPORT UPDATES

PAKISTAN: Christian Couple Acquitted of Blasphemy

Sources: CLAAS UK, International Christian Concern, Church in Chains, Jubilee Campaign



Pray for Shafqat and Shagufta's safety.
Photo: Family

After seven years on death row, Shafqat Emmanuel and his wife Shagufta Kausar were cleared of all charges against them by a Pakistani court on June 3rd, 2021. They were convicted on April 4th, 2014, after being accused of sending "blasphemous" text messages. The texts were allegedly sent from Shagufta's phone, which had gone missing a month prior and was never recovered. Furthermore, as the couple are illiterate, they would not have been able to send the alleged texts. (See [this page](#) for more details on the original conviction.)

The years spent in prison were particularly hard on Shafqat, who is paralyzed below the waist due to an accident in 2004. As a result of his infirmity, he was at the mercy of prison guards for the assistance he needed. In April of this year, Amnesty International reported that he was suffering from severe bed sores and was in significant pain. The family

disclosed that he had also been in a coma for three days this past March but was never taken to hospital.

While thankful for the couple's release, several organizations have highlighted the dangers now awaiting them. Similar to Asia Bibi, who was forced to flee the country for safety, they face a life of hiding from vigilante mobs who continue to threaten their lives.

Praise God that the judges have ruled favourably towards this couple and overturned the convictions. As Shafqat and Shagufta seek to be reunited with family and friends, including their four children, ask that the Lord's protection and blessings be upon them. Also pray that Shafqat will receive the medical attention he requires, even while living in hiding. May any attempts of those who seek to harm them and their loved ones be thwarted, with hopes there will soon be a time when this Christian couple would no longer need to hide but rather be allowed to live in safety and harmony with others in their community.

ALGERIA: Suspended Prison Sentence

Source: Middle East Concern

On February 27th, Pastor Rachid Seighir was convicted of "shaking the faith" of Muslims through the availability of materials in his church's bookstore in Oran, Algeria. He, along with his bookstore sales representative, Nouh Hamimi, were sentenced to two years in prison. For more on this case, see [this report](#).

The men appealed the decision, and a ruling was expected on May 30th. After a week's delay, the judgement was reduced on June 6th to a one-year suspended sentence, along with a fine of \$1,800.00 CAD each. The men intend to appeal their initial conviction.



The church building in Mostaganem.
Photo: Middle East Concern

Government-Mandated Church Closures

Due to further governmental oppression against Algerian Christians, the administrative court of Oran issued an order on June 4th to close three area churches, including that of the congregation led by Pastor Rachid.

As the result of a separate court decision, a church building in Mostaganem, which had been confiscated more than a decade ago, has been returned to the Église Protestante d'Algérie. This building, along with others, is considered a historically recognized place of worship. The verdict was issued in May 2019, but authorities delayed the release of the building until this month.

Praise God for the sentence reduction that was recently granted to Pastor Rachid and his assistant Nouh, and for the return of the Mostaganem church building to its rightful denominational organization. Continue to pray

for a successful conclusion to the latest appeal relating to the Christian bookstore. Intercede also for the members of the other mentioned churches which were also ordered for official closure. May these believers find ways to continue gathering together for worship and praise, while awaiting the hopeful reopening of their church buildings.

SAUDI ARABIA: Believer Faces Hefty Fine for Assisting Others

Sources: Open Doors Canada, Middle East Concern

A court in Saudi Arabia has recently imposed a hefty fine of 300,000 SAR (which converted equates to approximately \$97,000 CAD) on a Christian man who can only be identified as "A" or "Adam" for security reasons. He has been given 30 days to pay the fine unless an appeal is granted within that time.

This believer was charged for helping his Christian sister safely flee from the country, as well as his purported attempts to convert Muslims (see [this report](#)). Adding to his demise, opposing family members who were responsible for instigating the charges forcibly seized his wife and attempted to convince her to divorce him ([read more](#)). Thankfully, she was eventually able to return home and be reunited with her husband. "Adam" now has four weeks to file an appeal and make necessary arrangements for his family's safety.



Pray that Saudi believers will know they are never alone.

Continue to lift up this faithful Christian man and his family in your prayers. May he be successful in his appeal, as well as the plans he now must make to ensure their safety. Pray that this believer will continue to be a testimony to the opposing extended family members, as well as others around him, who are desperately in need of eternal salvation through God's Son, Jesus Christ.

The Persecution & Prayer Alert is a ministry of:
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