

Pakistan: Governor Punjab Salman Tasser killed on Islamic laws dispute

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The governor of Pakistan's Punjab province Salman Taseer, 47, was shot dead today (Jan. 4) by one of his own guards, elite security force protector, Malik Mumtaz Hussain Qadri, when Tasser was leaving his car, near a shopping centre Kohsar Market in Islamabad, the capital of Pakistan.

The killer has taken into custody by the police on the spot and police also arrested 6 more people in this connection. Around 4 pm, the assassin fired 9 bullets on Taseer's stomach, chest, neck and face. Although Taseer was taken to Polyclinic Hospital Islamabad, he died on the spot, police sources say.

Qadri said in his initial statement that he killed the governor because of his views on Islamic blasphemy laws and visiting Aasia Noreen, a Christian women alleged blasphemer, in jail and declaring her innocent.

On Nov. 8, 2010, Noreen, 45-years old and a resident of the Muslim village of Ittawali in the Punjab province of Pakistan, was sentenced to death by a Pakistani court for allegedly defaming Prophet Muhammad under blasphemy law Section 295-C of Pakistan Penal Code.

Governor Taseer visited Aasia on Nov. 20, 2010 in jail and get signed a clemency petition from her which he later presented to the President of Pakistan Asif Ali Zardari. He was very vocal on blasphemy laws and called them as black laws. The Islamic religious groups condemned Taseer and demanded for his immediate removal. In addition, a fundamentalist Islamic party issued apostasy decree against Governor Taseer but the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) rejected this decree and condemned the move against the governor. Once again, on Dec. 31, the Tehreek Tahaffuz-e-Namoos-e-Risalat (TTNR) asked the PPP government to dismiss the governor.

His murder was another most high-profile assassination of a political figure in Pakistan. At the same time, it is the first high-profile murder in relations to blasphemy laws in Islamic Republic of Pakistan. Taseer was a member of Benazir Bhutto's (who was assassinated on Dec. 27, 2007 in Rawalpindi, twin city of Islamabad) Pakistan People's Party and a close comrade of President Asif Ali Zardari, Bhutto's widower and the President of the country.

Salmaan Taseer was a businessman and a politician as well. He was appointed governor of Punjab on May 15, 2008. Punjab is Pakistan's most populous province with about 56% of the country's total population. About 80 per cent Christians live in this province.

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