

Muslim Mob Demands Death Sentence For Alleged Christian Blasphemers

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Recently more Christians are facing alleged charges under controversial blasphemy laws in Pakistan. Christian families in Lahore were forced to flee for their safety and at the same time thousands of Muslim protesters demand death sentence for alleged Christian blasphemers in Faisalabad city.

Muslim mob took out a procession in Faisalabad city, Punjab province, on July 10 and 11, 2010 and were demanding for the death sentence of two Christian brothers, Rashid Emmanuel, 32, a pastor of his own religious ministry, and Sajid Emmanuel, a student of Masters in Business Administration of Daud Nagar, Faisalabad. They were arrested on July 2, 2010 on the charges of writing a pamphlet with blasphemous remarks about Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) and they were detained at the Civil Lines Police Station Faisalabad, the Minorities Concern of Pakistan learnt.

"The protests were held in Waris Pura locality where more than 100,000 Christians are living. They wanted to attack and burn the area where Emmanuel brothers' house was located. The protesters chanted slogans, raised weapons and announced to teach the lesson to the Christian community. They also stoned the Catholic Church in Waris Pura and burnt tires on the roads to show their anger. Despite the presence of the police the protesters did not disburse but announced to continue their protest. The Christian community in Faisalabad city, especially in Waris Pura, the second biggest slum in the city, was scared and many of them fled to their relatives in other towns and villages," Atif Jamil Pagaan, told the Minorities Concern of Pakistan.

The mob threatened that if both Christians were not given death sentence they will themselves take revenge not only from the two brothers but from the whole Christian community, the Christian social worker said.

The charges levied on them are false as no evidence or witness is present. The hand written photo copy pamphlet is distributed by some unknown people and the names and telephone numbers of Rashid and Sajid are given on them, Pagaan of Harmony Foundation asserted.

The Christians of the area say that the situation could become serious and violent as it was happened in Gojra city a year ago in which nine Christians were burnt alive and more than 120 homes of Christian community were completely burnt by a Muslim mob who wanted to punish to the Christian community in the area for alleged charges of blasphemy against a Christian Talib Masih.

In another case on July 5, a Christian family from Model Town Lahore, Punjab province, was forced to leave their home and were escaped for their safety. A Christian Yousaf Masih, his wife Bashrian Bibi and their son-in-law Zahid Masih were accused of blasphemy against Quran. About 2,000 angry Muslims protested against them and tried to burn their house. The police have filed a case against them under blasphemy laws because of the pressure of the Muslim mob. According to local sources the allegation against Christians is because of personal rancour and enmity.

Another family of a Christian human rights activist Saleem Sylvester also left their home and forced

to live in a rented house somewhere else to save themselves from the blasphemy charges. According to Sylvester, some unknown persons threw some torn pages of Holy Quran on his roof on June 21, 23 and 25, 2010. Fortunately, they discover these pages timely nonetheless the threat continues. "To save my family I shifted them to a rented house on July 27," his email message says. "The family is still under threat because after couple of days they received a threatening call on their mobile phone. An application for their safety was submitted to the Superintendent of Police Model Town Circle, Lahore," the email message of Sylvester said which was sent on July 9, 2010.

Although the situation for Christians is quite tense because of the blasphemy laws, two Christians Boota Maish and Riaz Maish, were granted bail under blasphemy laws on July 2. They both were arrested by the police on Oct. 30, 2009 and were sent to jail in Lahore.

Religious minorities, including Christians, Hindis, Sikhs, Ahmadis and Shias, say that the blasphemy laws, which were introduced by a military dictator, were widely misused against them. It is evident that in majority of cases the charges are mala fides - such as personal enmity, religious rivalry, property disputes etc.

The Minorities Concern of Pakistan repeatedly have been demanding to the government that the these laws should be repealed as soon as possible to save the lives of many innocent people and to bring harmony in the society which has been shattered since the promulgation of these contentious laws.

"Blasphemy laws provide harsh sentences, including the death penalty, and injuring the "religious feelings" of individual citizens is prohibited. Incidents in which police officials take bribes to file false blasphemy charges against Ahmadis, Christians, Hindus, and occasionally Muslims continue to occur, with several dozen cases reported each year. No blasphemy convictions have withstood appeal to date, but the charges alone can lead to lengthy detentions, ill-treatment in custody, and persecution by religious extremists," says Freedom House report; Freedom in the World - Pakistan (2010) which was issued this month.

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