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Family of Pakistani Christian Couple Burned for Alleged Blasphemy: We Are Being Threatened, Bribed to End Investigation

By [Stephanie Samuel](#), Christian Post Reporter | Friday, November 21, 2014

Family members of the Pakistan Christian couple burned to death say they are being pressured to drop their calls for a criminal case and demand the government to protect them, in a recent press conference.

Shahbaz Masih and wife Parveen are petitioning the government to get justice for his brother Shehzad Masih and sister-in-law Shama, who was believed to be pregnant when a mob, allegedly led by Muslim clerics, burned them alive in a kiln. So far regional Kot Radha Kishan police have arrested 44 people in connection to the incident.

However the Masih family says they are receiving threats to drop their pleas for an investigation. The family said they have also been offered bribes of land and money to end the case. But they are determined to get justice for their family.



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"All we want is fair investigation of the case," said Shahbaz Masih, according to [The Express Tribune](#).

There were reports that Shehzad and Shama Masih were killed for desecrating the Quran. However Shehzad's cousin Emanuel Sarfraz explained they were murdered over a work place dispute.

The couple worked low wage jobs in a kiln alongside Sarfraz to support their family. When the couple tried to leave, the owner Muhammad Yousuf Gujjar tried to charge them 500,000 Pakistani Rupees – the equivalent of nearly \$5,000 U.S. dollars.

Guffair locked the couple and their children in a room when they refused to pay the fee. Then an announcement was made from two mosques in the village that the couple had committed blasphemy by burning the pages of a Quran.



Sarfraz described the scene saying, "A large number of Muslims led by area clerics reached the kiln and dragged the couple out of the room after breaking into it."

Shehzad and Shama Masih pleaded with the crowd but the crowd continued to torture and beat the couple before throwing them in the kiln.

"No one from the crowd listened to the couple, who were pleading that they were innocent as Yousuf had levelled a false allegation of blasphemy against them to settle a money dispute," Sarfraz told local papers. "Thank God they did not burn the couple's children."

Pakistan Interfaith League Chairman Sajid Ishaq said this case is important because it could possibly set a precedent for future disputes. Referring to previous blasphemy cases, Ishaq urged, "If the perpetrators of Gojra, Joseph Colony and the Rimsha Masih case had been punished, no one would have dared to burn Shehzad and his wife."

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Two Pakistan Churches Attacked by Islamists

By [Compass Direct News](#), | Wednesday, July 14, 2010

SARGODHA, Pakistan (Compass Direct News) – Christian communities in two areas came under attack in Punjab Province earlier this month.

In Sargodha, an unidentified motorcyclist on July 1 tossed a grenade in front of the gates of St. Filian's Church of Pakistan, next to a small Christian-owned amusement park where children were playing, Christian sources said.

One of the owners of the playground, Shehzad Masih, said the hand-made grenade was thrown just before 9 p.m., when hot summer weather had cooled and the park was crammed with parents and their children. It did not explode.



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Masih said children told him that after throwing the grenade, the motorcyclist sped away, disappearing into the traffic of University Road in Sargodha, a major street where government offices are located. Masih said police confirmed that it was an explosive device that did not go off.

The Rev. Pervez Iqbal of St. Filian's said the Bomb Disposal Squad and New Satellite Town police took the grenade away. High-ranking police officials cordoned off the area, declaring a "High Red Alert" in Sargodha, he added. He and Masih said the whole area was evacuated.

"By the grace of God, that hand grenade did not go off, and there was no loss of life or property despite the fact that the alleged militant made his best efforts to throw it close to the entrance of the church, possibly inside the church," Iqbal said.

A retired member of the army who now serves as a clergyman told Compass that a standard hand grenade normally has eight ounces of explosive material capable of killing within 30 to 50 yards.

"Nowadays Muslim militants are able to make their own hand-made grenades," he said on condition of anonymity, adding that the explosive content in the undetonated grenade has not been revealed.

Area Christians said the attempted attack comes after many Christian clergymen and heads of Christian organizations received threatening letters from Islamic militants.

In spite of the incident, the following Sunday service took place at its usual time.

Iqbal told Compass that police have taken no special measures to protect the church building since the attempted attack, though a police patrol vehicle is stationed outside the church gate.

"This is the only measure taken by the police to beef up security at the church," he said.

Bulldozer

At a small village near Sheikhupura, Punjab Province, a church building and Christian homes came under threat of demolition on July 5. Islamic extremists issued threats as, accompanied by local police, they intended to demolish the Apostolic Church Pakistan structure in Lahorianwali, Narang Mandi, with a bulldozer, area Christians said.

Assistant Sub-Inspector Rana Rauf led Narang Mandi police and the extremists in an attempted demolition that was averted with the intervention of Christian leaders who called in district police.

The attempted assault followed the arrest on July 1 of local influential Muslim Muhammad Zulfiqar, who had forcibly stopped renovation of a church wall on that day; he was released the same day.

"Rana Rauf disdainfully used derogatory remarks against Christians, calling them 'Gadha [donkey],' and said they go astray unless a whip is used to beat them and show them the straight path," said Yousaf Masih, a Christian who also had been arrested and released on July 1, when Rauf, Zulfiqar and the extremists stopped the renovation work.

Another area Christian, Zulfiqar Gill, told Compass that the Islamic extremists threatened the Christians in the July 5 incident.

"They said that if we ever tried to rebuild the walls or renovate the frail Apostolic Church building, they would create a scene here like Gojra," said Gill. On Aug. 1, 2009, Islamic assailants acting on a false rumor of blaspheming the Quran and whipped into frenzy by local imams attacked a Christian colony in Gojra, burning at least seven Christians to death, injuring 19 others, looting more than 100 houses and setting fire to 50 of them. The dead included women and children.

Khalid Gill of the Christian Lawyers' Foundation said Zulfiqar has tried to illegally obtain the church property and attacked the structure twice previously in the past two years. Younas Masih said Zulfiqar demolished one of the church walls on Oct. 8, 2008, and local Christian Akber Masih said Zulfiqar set aflame the tents and decorations of a Christmas Service at the Apostolic Church Pakistan in 2009.

In each case, Christians filed charges against Zulfiqar, but because of his wealth and influence he was never arrested, area Christians said.

A Deputy District Officer Revenue report states that Zulfiqar has illegally occupied land and wishes to seize the church property and the house of an assistant pastor. Zulfiqar has already demolished the house of the assistant pastor, Waris Masih, according to the report.

Lahorianwali is a predominantly Islamic village of more than 350 Muslim families and only 36 Christian families, sources said.