



Christian in Pakistan Accused of Blasphemy, Faces Death Penalty

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Washington -- International Christian Concern (ICC) has learned that an 18-year-old Christian has been falsely accused of blasphemy, beaten, and imprisoned in Gujranwala, Pakistan.

The young man, Safian Masih, lived in a mixed neighborhood of both Christians and Muslims. On August 8, the young daughter of one of his Muslim neighbors demanded that Safian bring her items from the grocery store. Safian refused, and she slapped him. Safian slapped her back, and the argument escalated to include both families.

After the altercation, the girl's parents accused Safian of trying to rape their daughter. When other Muslims heard this, they gathered and severely beat him. After beating him, they submitted a report to the police accusing Safian of rape, and had him handed over to police custody and jail.

Two days later, on August 10, the Muslims changed their story and accused Safian of blasphemy instead of rape. They claimed that the girl was attending a madrassa to learn about the Qur'an, and that when Safian encountered her he took her Qur'an and tore out its pages. After hearing this accusation, some Muslims attacked Safian again and beat him so badly that they forced him to "admit" that he had "blasphemed" the Qur'an. They then handed him over to the police again.

On August 14, a Muslim mob gathered and demanded that Safian be put to death for blasphemy.

Safian is currently in police custody, but his family has fled their home because they fear for their safety. The mob also threatened to kill anyone who helped Safian or his family.

ICC's Jonathan Racho said, "In Pakistan, Christians live as second-class citizens and repeatedly face violence from the Muslims majority. Muslims easily exacerbate small disagreements and call for the execution or even murder of Christians. While ICC does not condone Safian's slapping of a Muslim girl, it is unconscionable for Muslims to call for his death."

International Christian Concern

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